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THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

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Hands
Manchester Orchestra
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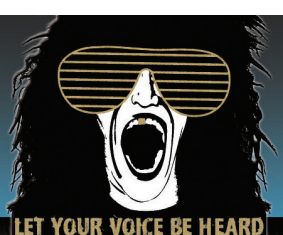

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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

PEACE IN THE STORM

Publishing a print magazine these days has its challenges. While it appears we have shown some improvement this year, we really need more of that improvement stuff. The future is uncertain, but God is faithful. He is trustworthy and He's a great Person to run to when scared, uncertain or hurting. "God is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." I love that line from my favorite Psalm (#34).

I am going to ask for more help in the next few weeks, so be checking out my blog at hmmag.com. I want to put some hands and feet on this "community magazine" and "volunteer army" idea I have. It might involve skills (like writing or selling ads or posting content on websites) and it might just involve some willingness to help out (like trying to get HM Magazine some press in various media outlets, promoting the magazine with online postings or leaving flyers/ postcards at strategic locations). Tell a friend about HM Magazine.

I'm about to launch a couple more kickstarter campaigns for some books I've written. You can get information on that in my blog as well.

Enough magazine business talk, though. Let's discuss the great content in this issue. I'm pretty stoked about the things that artists like August Burns Red and Sleeping Giant had to say. It was hard to choose between the two for the cover story, so we whipped out an old HM idea – the "double flip" cover. I hope you don't get dizzy reading the magazine and flipping it over to read more. The words of Kemper, Chad, Greg are quite encouraging as well.

SPINNING AT HM NOW

TDWP	*Dead Throne*	Whoa nelly! Another good one. Advances rule!
TFK	*Live at the Masquerade*	Rockin' live album shows veteran skills.
VISION	*Streetfighter*	Lost So-Rock album unearthed by Born Twice.
VARIOUS ARTISTS	*Who Cares*	Benefit EP for Armenia earthquake victims.
MANAFEST	*Live in Concert*	Killer rock album from hip-hop veteran.
MATW	*Lion's Roar*	Trippy Reggae worship EP. Bowie meets Costello.
THE APPRENTICE	*Oh the Slavery Comfort...*	Laid-back, textured alt-rock album with stories.

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HARDNEWS
Quick & concise

STILL REMAINS
EPIC METALLERS RE-UNITE

Metal fans have something to be excited about, as Still Remains is back in the studio, recording new music. "Writing has commenced," shares frontman TJ Miller. "All the vibes are good. The energy is good. We are all feeding off of each other. We are writing all our new material in a new, fresh and inspiring environment. Everyone who took part on *Of Love and Lunacy* is involved. The songs are by far the fastest that we've written as a band. Lots of atmosphere and very epic. Very metal. For the first time in Still Remains history, I feel like everyone is on the same page. A home show has been booked. Our first show at home in over three years. And I can honestly say that, although touring will be very, very minimum, this is going to be a very ... fun ride."

CORY LAMB
TEAMS UP WITH STEPHEN BALDWIN

Cory Lamb is a rhythmic rocker with an edgy single called "Break the Cycle," who tapped actor Stephen Baldwin to direct the video for the song. It's Baldwin's first direction of a music video and it turned out pretty cool. According to Cory, the title track "Break the Cycle" is about "figuring out who you are and becoming an individual, instead of listening to other people tell you how to live your life." Stephen Baldwin felt compelled to make his directorial debut on the project because he said, "Not only is Cory's music relevant, but his message is, as well ... I believe in Cory's passion and outside-the-box way of thinking in regards to delivering a positive message to today's youth." Cory has been booked for Creation, Sonshine, LifeFest and HeavenFest. The *Break the Cycle* full-length hits 9/13.

Acts of Sharing app helping bands and fans

Here's a cool new app that creates a social hub where people connect and share what they have. Easy-to-use and navigate, the app facilitates one person sharing their items, gifts or services with others as they have need. "We're definitely excited about the possibility of musicians sharing the equipment they need for shows and making it sustainable for them to do what they love," gushes founder Brian Boitmann. "We believe most everything you're looking for can be found through the relationships you share. Most of what we have sits idly on shelves, in garages and throughout our homes for months on end without being used. Simply knowing what those in your community have and are willing to share enables you to find much of what you are buying and looking for on a regular basis.It will enable you not only to scan items you're sharing on the go, but you'll now be able to scan an individual item to see whether a friend has it before you buy it. We've seen peoples' lives transformed to meet each other's needs and develop better relationships."

News bullets

The new **Switchfoot** album (*Vice Verses*) will come out September 27th on Credential Recordings/lowercase people and Atlantic Records. The band worked with producer Neal Avron (Weezer, Linkin Park) and recorded most of it in their San Diego, CA home studio. Mike Elizondo (Eminem, Regina Spektor) who produced *Hello Hurricane*, served as executive producer on this one. "*Vice Verses* is a record of tension and release," relates Jon Foreman. "It's an attempt to describe the polarity of the human experience. The sunlight and shadow. The highs and lows, laughter and pain, hope and fear, doubts and belief."

P.O.D. and **Red** are both on the *Rock Allegiance Tour*, with co-headliners Buckcherry and Papa Roach.

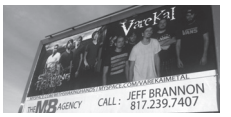
Relient K is releasing a new EP this summer as it heads out on *Warped Tour*. *K is for Karaoke* is a covers album, which includes: "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" (Cyndi Lauper); "Here Comes My Girl" (Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers); "Baby" (Justin Bieber); "Doctor Worm" (They Might Be Giants); "Crazy" (Gnarls Barkley); "Everybody Wants to Rule the World" (Tears for Fears); and "Surf Wax America" (Weezer).

12 Stones will drop their new album (*Only Human*) on September 6 on Executive Music Group.

The *Ska Lives Vol. 2?* compilation includes **The Insyderz**, **Christafari**, **A Billion Emies**, and **Five Iron Frenzy** as well as several up and coming bands. And speaking of Insyderz, they're currently raising money via kickstarter to record a new album with guests like **Reese Roper**, **Matt Morginsky** and **Tim Tabor**.

The new album (*Dead Throne*) from **The Devil Wears Prada** is set for a September 13 release on Ferret. **Mike Hranica** described it by commenting, "It contains the heavy aspects of the *Zombie* EP, meshed with the melody of the full-lengths. I'd call it our most emotional, well-written album to date. TDWP will headline *Warped Tour* all summer long.

Colorado Springs' metallic hardcore band **Altars** has signed to Strike First Records.



Industry Profile: The MB Agency

JEFF BRANNON WAS A TOURING MEMBER OF THE BAND CRIES HANNAH. NOW'S HE'S A MANAGER AND HE'S GETTING HIS ARTISTS ON BILLBOARDS IN HOLLYWOOD AND NASHVILLE.

How did you come up with the idea to give away billboard space to bands? What were the details of entering the contest (from the band's side)? How did you pull it off? What were some of the logistics involved? What has the response been?
Our billboards have been a big success both for The MB Agency and the bands involved. We've seen a large jump in the plays bands get online, we've had calls from many industry professionals regarding the spots and have created great new relationships off of the exposure. The original idea of our billboards came about when driving through Nashville and has quickly grown as we now have many spots including some great locations in Hollywood and Nashville. We offer different sizing options on the billboards to give any band a chance to get added exposure. With the online contest we ran (half billboard giveaway) bands are encouraged to have their fans vote on our Facebook page and the band with the most votes wins the spot.

What do you look for in working with a band?
The MB Agency looks for hardworking bands that are willing to put the time and effort into their career. We help get the bands the exposure they deserve, but there has to be more than just exposure in order to generate a buzz. It doesn't necessarily mean the band has to be touring full-time, but that they have good work ethics. A band with great music that just "expects" for things to fall into place won't make it very far. They need to put in the needed work to advertise and promote their band.

How do you think your experience as a touring band member has given you a helpful perspective on management?
I've been in the industry for seven years and recently ended my drum career after playing for a year and a half with the band Thirtyseven (Blood & Ink). After touring for the last several years it has made it much easier to realize what bands are looking for and need. I've made many relationships and many connections over the years and with recently becoming a member of The Recording Academy (who put on the GRAMMY's) it has opened a door to many more beneficial connections. I think that the hard work I've put in over the years can come back to benefit younger bands and I'm very excited to help further their career.

What does a band have to give up when signing on a manager?
I wouldn't say a band has to "give up" anything. Perhaps they allow someone else to make tough calls, or handle middle-man discussions, but it gives the bands more time to focus on their music, shows, etc; but they don't need to give up creative control.

What things does a label like about dealing with a manager on behalf of a band? What are some things a label doesn't like about this arrangement?
Having a third party has always been of benefit. A manager can help the band negotiate offers and help communicate better between all members of the band and label. Although it seems easy, not every band meets up to discuss things in entirety and then relay it as needed, (laughs). With working with The MB Agency, we can also help you get the best advertising campaign created, and communicate with all parties needed to decide what's within budget, and get it pulled off.

How does your faith play a role in your company's attitudes and actions?
My actions outside of the company are the same as inside the company. Everything that is done is given to God 100%, because I know there isn't a way any of it would happen without Him. We make a point to offer the best service at the lowest price and to pair the band with great companies and resources to help them further their career. We make sure to find deals that can truly benefit the band and band members and work with bands of all genres, beliefs, and career points.

Saving Grace have signed to Facedown Records for the release of their new full-length, *The King is Coming*. Look for it in early winter.

Mat Kearney kicked off a US tour in support of his new album, *Young Love*, due out August 2nd on Universal Republic. He is currently on tour through July with **Owl City** and **Unwed Sailor**.

For Today is releasing vinyl of its first 2 albums, *Ekklesia* and *Portraits*.

Paramore's song "Monster" and **Skillet**'s song "Awake & Alive" are on the *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* soundtrack.

A Plea For Purging has re-signed with Facedown Records. APFP will be heading into the studio in August to record with Josh Schroeder.

The Color Morale will be heading out on the *Scream Like You Mean It Tour* through the months of July and August.

David Crowder Band has announced that their fall tour will be the last tour as a band.

Call To Preserve is calling it quits as well. Their upcoming 7" release, *Validation*, is slated to be their last.

Joey Puente, former drummer for **Stryken**, has put together a new group around his vocals comprised of: **Ron "Zilla" Campbell** (**Monsterus**) on drums; **Ez Gomér** (**Jet Circus**, **Leviticus**) on bass/vocals; **Paul Cawley** (**Guardian**) on rhythm guitar/vocals; **Michael Tyrrell** (**Doro Pesch**, **Mylon LeFevre**) lead guitars and **Brent Jeffers** (**Stryper**/**Guardian**) on keyboards. The band will be called **The Fall of Vegas** and they hope to record some tunes in July.

7eventh Time Down has signed to BEC Recordings. They will be releasing their label debut on September 13th.

Rottweiler Records just signed **Soul Embraced**. The label is releasing **Behold the Kingdom**'s *The Eyes of the Wicked Will Fail* on August 12th.

Album: *Scripted*
Label: Tooth & Nail
Release Date: August 23, 2011
Members: Ariel Bloomer, vocals; Shawn Jump, guitar; Adam Kronshagen, drums; Josh Kincheloe, bass
RIYL: Paramore, Flyleaf, I Am Empire

myspace.com/iconforhire

ICON FOR HIRE

Not many unsigned bands can say they played 250 shows in a year, all while holding down full-time jobs. For Decatur, Illinois band, Icon For Hire, this was all just part of the journey.

After a whirlwind year of playing show after show, the band signed with Tooth & Nail Records last winter and completed work on their debut album, out August 23rd. After all that, you'd think vocalist Ariel Bloomer, guitarist Shawn Jump and drummer Adam Kronshagan would take time to soak in their successes. Wrong.

"We self-booked a tour and we're going on tour in July with the Letter Black, Write This Down, Nine Lashings and I Am Empire – all Tooth & Nail bands," Kronshagan says. "We're doing that all through July and we're actually talking to our booking agent today about who we're going out with. We hope to stay out all year."

After showing the world what they've got: drive and diligence paired with a boisterous yet melodic sound, Icon For Hire hit the studio with renowned producers Rob Hawkins (I Am Empire, Fireflight) and Aaron Sprinkle (The Almost, Anberlin).

"It was great (working with Hawkins and Sprinkle)," Kronshagan says. "They have such different work styles, so it took some adjusting … but both of them were great people. We really enjoyed getting to know them. They inspired us and pushed us. We also feel that they put out awesome products, so we're really happy with this album. We know that in a couple years we might not love it, but right now we're still pumped and we're stoked and we can't wait to get it into peoples' hands."

Signing with Tooth & Nail meant the band was able to be more thorough in the studio, work with talented producers and have creative control to make an album they could be happy with.

After signing with the label, the band started to get questions about whether or not they identify with being a Christian band. Ariel insists the band has never been a Christian band and that signing with Tooth & Nail didn't change that. In the lyrics to the first single, "Make a Move," from their debut full-length, it's easy to understand where the band stands on the issue:

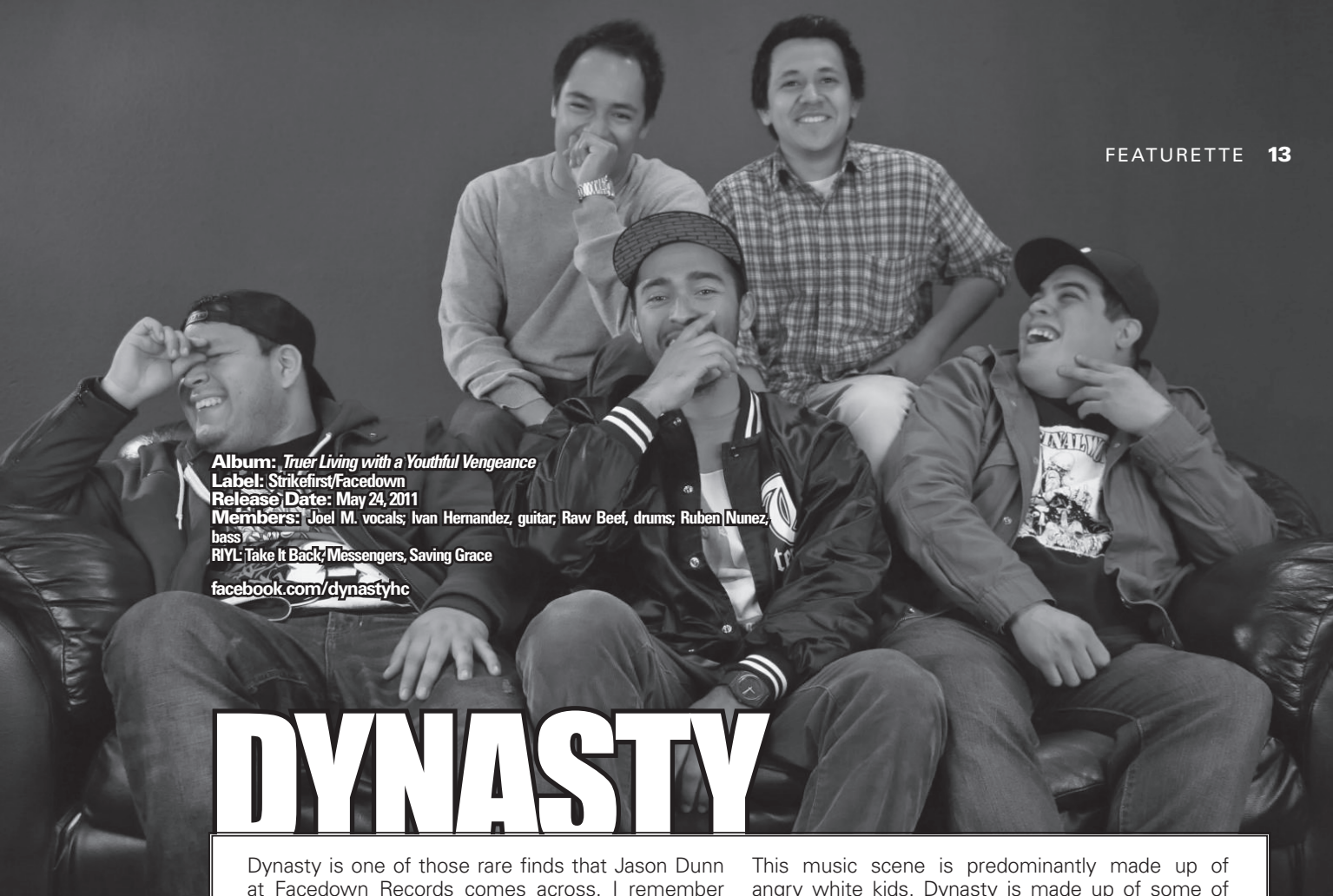
"And if I had the answers I'd have written them out / So I could tell you what to do and what this thing is about / But all I've ever learned's come second hand / And I dare not preach what I don't understand."

"We get some people who almost try to talk us into it, almost like they want to convince us that's what we are. We don't understand why we would want to limit our audience to only Christians, because we feel like as a band and as people, we have a lot to offer, though none of it involves an altar call or a salvation prayer," Ariel says. "I myself am trying to follow Jesus and do what He commanded, but I don't incorporate Christian themes in the lyrics and I don't talk about Him on stage."

Icon For Hire has already proven their ambition and determination and even though they're facing a ridiculously busy touring schedule over the next year, the band says there's no other way they'd rather have it.

"This is what we're supposed to be doing. Even on the hard nights when we're playing to 20 kids and we're sleeping on the band floor, whatever," Ariel says. "This is exactly what we're supposed to be doing. There is no other place we'd want to be, for real."

BY BRITTANY MCNEAL



Album: *Truer Living with a Youthful Vengeance*
Label: Strikefirst/Facedown
Release Date: May 24, 2011
Members: Joel M. vocals; Ivan Hernandez, guitar; Raw Beef, drums; Ruben Nunez, bass
RIYL: Take It Back, Messengers, Saving Grace

facebook.com/dynastyhc

DYNASTY

Dynasty is one of those rare finds that Jason Dunn at Facedown Records comes across. I remember asking him if he was going to sign any new bands the first part of the year. He said he had two in the works and one was a hardcore band. I asked if they were straight-up hardcore and he said, "Yeah, straight-up hardcore. Terror kind of stuff. Good kids from LA. You know it's a good find when they're Christian dudes that list Merauder as an influence!"

I was stoked, to say the least. Jason rarely signs straight-up hardcore bands. With Call To Preserve breaking up, all we have left is Take It Back, Messengers, Saving Grace (new stuff is more hardcore) and now Dynasty. Five hardcore bands out of a twenty-one band lineup.

It took a while for me to get the band name out of him. When he finally did and I went and listened to some rough demos on this band Dynasty's MySpace, I was hooked. I became friends with a few of the guys on Facebook and hung out with them at Facedown Fest.

These guys will bring SoCal Spirit-filled hardcore back with a vengeance. You would think these guys would have been signed to Facedown sooner than when they did – being a band for six years. I found out from Joel their vocalist that they were not always a Christian band and, "had no intentions of even being a spiritual band. Crazy, wild, dark times were in the midst of us and to make it short – Jesus came like a thief in the night and set it straight."

This music scene is predominantly made up of angry white kids. Dynasty is made up of some of my Hispanic brothers. Joel said it was not always like that. "At one time Dynasty was 3/4 white dudes. We do have a great Hispanic-rooted hardcore scene with bands like Make Move, Xbalba, Loud n Rowdy, Rotting Out, Soul Search and Sleepwalkers."

I got to see first-hand the love of hip-hop that Dynasty has at Facedown Fest when they covered The Beastie Boys. Their song "Way of the Wolf" deals with that community. I was wondering what Joel's thoughts were on hip-hop and how it is getting even darker.

"Mainstream media pushes the whole 'Do what thou wilt' agenda. The youth in our community, where kids are really doing what they want ... no matter who stands in their way, they're just looking out for number one."

With a full-length under their belt and Call To Preserve's farewell tour this summer, I had to wonder what else lay ahead for this band from the City of Angels. "In August we'll be a releasing a free five-to-eight song cover album, and for 2012 all I'm saying is 'Word is Born!'"

Joel says this band knows "Wisdom is Supreme." His last words-to-the-wise were: "Resist. Refuse. Rebuke. Oh ... and Let's Skate."

BY ROB SHAMELESS

Album: *Broken Voice*
Label: Facedown
Release Date: July 5, 2011
Members: Aaron Stone, vocals/guitar; Jesse Stone, drums/vocals; Jeremiah Austin, bass
RIYL: Thrice, As Cities Burn, Silverchair

myspace.com/myepic

MY EPIC

In the fall of 2004, brothers Aaron and Jesse Stone and Jeremiah Austin formed My Epic. In 2010, they released the full-length album, *Yet*. Now, on July 5, they will release their follow-up, an acoustic-based EP, titled *Broken Voice*.

The Stone brothers had been in another band with a friend that broke up in the summer of 2004, which is when Aaron Stone said the brothers recruited Austin and formed My Epic.

"I kept telling the guys I wanted it to sound really epic, this was before the word was kind of a catch-phrase," Aaron Stone said.

He said the band's other guitarist at the time suggested names like Epic, The Epic or My Epic, all of which Stone disliked greatly.

"I was like, 'No, those all suck.' We voted and the name that I wanted lost and My Epic won," Stone said.

When all was said and done they decided they wanted God to look at their lives like it was His epic that He was writing.

"When we first started writing *Yet* we were really strategic in wanting that record to sound like our first full-length did," Stone said.

He said he was writing a lot of material on acoustics, because he did not have anywhere to put his gear. When the band finally got some space, a lot of the riffs did not work and sounded better acoustic.

"I've never liked acoustic before and it really made me start to like it. So we had these songs and we knew what we wanted *Yet* to sound like.

They wanted *Yet* to be a really heavy record, but they had a bunch of songs that didn't really fit their plans for the album. They started tossing around the idea of putting out an EP that would contain the acoustic tracks they had written.

"It would be from a completely different place, so it wouldn't wear (out) our writing or deplete our creativity."

They decided to do an acoustic record about a year and a half ago, halfway through the writing of *Yet*.

"We're not gonna change our sound or anything, but had other things we wanted to express," Stone said. "We wanted to put it out and we wanted to make it."

Stone said he expects their next full-length record to be even heavier after getting *Broken Voice* out, because, essentially, he said, they are getting their "pretties out."

"These songs are all really pretty, so when the next album comes out I want to make it really heavy," Stone said. "If we could keep doing it every other year, put a full-length out and the next year put an EP of acoustic material, I'd really like to do that."

BY REGGIE EDWARDS | LIVE PHOTO BY LINDSAY PARAMORE

Album: *Conviction*
Label: Razor & Tie
Release Date: June 21, 2011
Members: Saud Ahmed, vocals; Dan Hatfield, guitar; Brandon McMaster, guitar; Chris Yates, bass; Jordan Matz, drums
RIYL: Beneath the Massacre, Arsis, The Black Dahlia Murder

myspace.com/thecrimsonarmada

THE CRIMSON ARMADA

[Photo: Chase Clymer]

The CONVICTION is here and THE CRIMSON ARMADA are ready for their time.

With a tour on the horizon, and a new album, what are the differences between the old and new? "The biggest difference is the change in writers," explains frontman Saud Ahmed. "Before our old guitar player and drummer that just left the band, they wrote that album together. Everyone else threw in their ideas. This album was primarily written by myself and everyone added cool ideas here and there. We have grown up and matured musically and tons of different ways. When we wrote our last album we were all into death metal, and deathcore, melodic metal and stuff like that."

"The first album a band writes is nine times out of ten a combination of all the songs they have written in the course of their career until they get signed. We were one of those bands as well. *Guardians* was one of those albums, plus a few we wrote for the new album. So it wasn't a lot of thought that went into it. It was more, 'How can we throw these together and make them mesh as well as possible?' As a result they had a lot of similar feel and not a lot of variety, as opposed to this album that I wrote over the course of a year and a half. I learned how to play guitar and have a mini-studio to record bands at home. I learned a lot more about the songwriting process and those are major differences.

"There is a lot more time for me to calculate things, think about what kind of feel I want to come from the song and a lot more time for inspiration to find something to write about as opposed to forcing it out – and that drives the song. There is also a lot more passion on this CD. I am really passionate about the things I wrote about on this CD and the last CD I just had a thesaurus next to me and tried to write as many big words as possible."

With more thought, new inspirations and influences how passionate is TCA about the new album and how the fans reacted to it. "The majority of the topics are spiritually-based. (I) purposely decided to not delve into any specifics of religious names. Just very broad, very general, very how I feel about things. For example 'Conviction' is about how grounded I feel about the only thing I know in my walk with God is that there is a God. I'm not exactly sure how He operates or does things, but I'm really opened to a lot of ideas and different things. People tell me things and various actions with God. I think it's fascinating.

"The outline for the album, the one common theme is there is a God and that it is up to you to seek Him, in whichever way you see fit. A few songs on the album have nothing to do with God. For example, 'Napalm' is a song about *Call of Duty*. It's a response to Miss May I's 'Rough.' It was really cool, because they are really good friends of ours and they were able to get their vocalist Levi to appear as a guest on the song.

"The response has been absolutely positive. Including clean vocals ... our new guitar player Brandon, we discovered while in the studio he was a phenomenal singer. We thought it would be a complete waste to not include that in our album. Fans have adapted surprisingly well. We thought we were going to get a bunch of negative feedback, but the album just released. Everyone seems to be really stoked about it. I was on the ropes of whether people would receive the new music positively, but everyone has been extremely excited. We tried to open up on this CD and try and push the boundaries and use as many genres as possible."

BY TONY D. BRYANT

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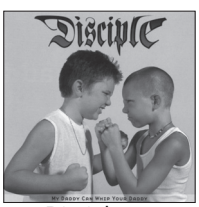

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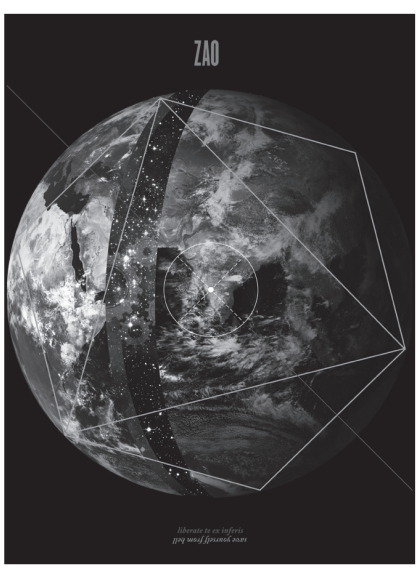

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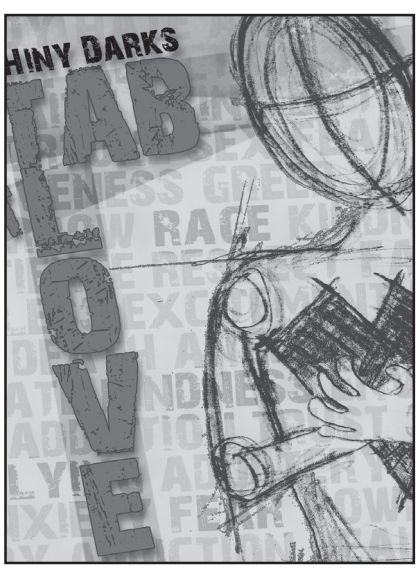

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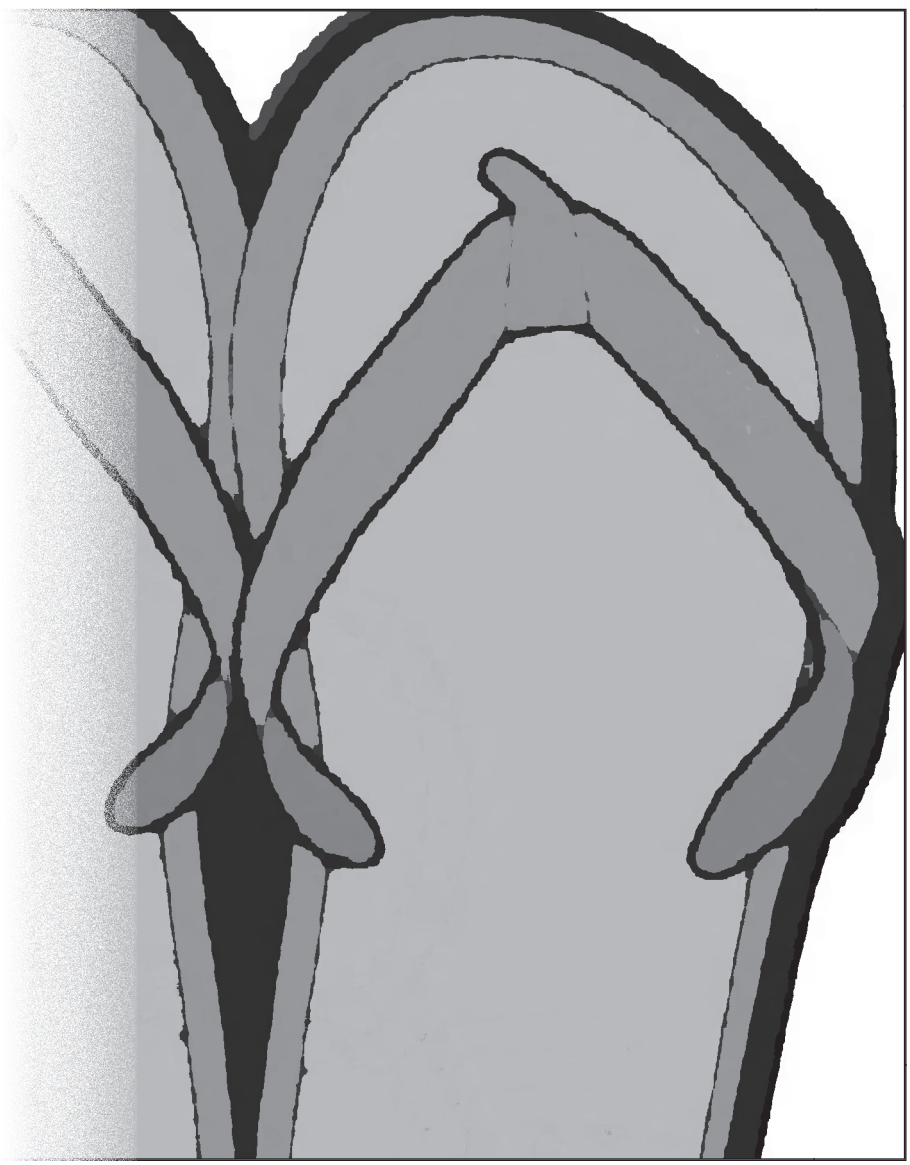


AUGUST BURNS RED

LEVELER

The album Messengers was released in 2007 and, despite a previous LP, it's the record that brought August Burns Red, a five-piece, sandal-wearing, baseball-loving, Lancaster, PA band on to the metal scene. Their next record, Constellations, would be the moment people say ABR arrived; but when you release a record like Leveler, you now get to say you're a cornerstone.

August Burns Red has matured, for sure. The band has been grown up ever since *Messengers*; but while *Messengers* was 11 songs of pure gut punching, *Leveler* is their musical movement, a joy ride that punches you and then asks you out to dinner. It's faster. It's thrashier, a tad more punkier. It takes its time when it wants to. ABR finally went off the cliff and decided to showcase all of their musical talents (technically and in their songwriting) – and not just the fact that they can write a sick breakdown.

The vocal in the middle of "Empire" is beautiful, moving right into a solo in a major key. A quarter of the way through "Internal Cannon" (which I guarantee to be the number one talked-about track on the record), they drop into a samba/Caribbean movement twice. Drummer Matt Greiner delivers what could possibly be the greatest metal drumming performance on a record ever. I want to say it's an evolution, but I know the talent has always been there – they only now decided to write this type of record.

Do the breakdowns exist? Absolutely. But they're stashed in between incredible song dynamics and musical direction you haven't ever heard from ABR. As the band explains it, they beleive they're blessed to have a fan base that will support this type of direction as the band releases album after album. As the adage goes, time will only support or deny this, but if you're asking me, go out and pick up the record right now. ~~[SOLID STATE] DAVID STAGG~~

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

RELIENT K

K IS FOR KARAOKE

Cyndi Lauper, Tom Petty, Justin Bieber, They Might Be Giants, Gnarls Barkley, Tears for Fears and Weezer should all be proud of Relient K's upcoming EP, *K Is For Karaoke*. Confused? Don't be. The band's latest record features covers of those artists. Relient K have given edge to an 80's pop anthem, "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun," and made "Baby" by Justin Bieber actually bearable to listen to. Tack that on with a great cover of "Here Comes My Girl" by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, a version of Gnarls Barkley's "Crazy" that closely resembles the original, along with "Everybody Wants to Rule the World," by Tears for Fears, "Dr. Worm" by They Might Be Giants and "Surf Wax America" by Weezer and you have one of the great cover albums of this year. A few of the song choices took me completely off guard, but Relient K does an awesome job. ~~[MONO VS. STEREO] REGGIE EDWARDS~~

CALL TO PRESERVE

VALIDATION

In 2003 Facedown Records put out XDISCIPLEx A.D.'s 7" *Blood Feud*. It was the b-sides to their last full-length, *The Revelation*. In 2004 at the top of their game they called it quits. Call To Preserve has held the banner of Spirit-filled hardcore for the last eight years and has done an amazing job. Just like XDISCIPLEx A.D. and Seventh Star, Call To Preserve are ending their run on top of their game with *Validation,* the first 7" since *Blood Feud*. It is hard to put these last four songs into words. It is the rawest emotional record they have ever put out. With one last reminder that we are "Filthy made perfect / Dying and living." This band will be greatly missed. Thank you guys for saying what we could never say ourselves. ~~[FACEDOWN] ROB SHAMELESS~~

JOSH GARRELS

LOVE & WAR & THE SEA IN BETWEEN

Josh Garrels' organic sounds have always interested since the outset of early out-of-print albums like *Stone Tree*, where even then the hippie folk meets inventive hip-hop backing worked to great effect. But it's *Love & War & The Sea In Between* that find a seasoned artist at work, collaborating with all the right players and learning through enough trial and error just how brilliant his voice can be. The end result here is an absolute tour de force that deserves album of the year consideration for those who take it in. A full 18 tracks including four instrumentals pack the material tight, but the sequencing is perfect and the flavors are well balanced. The sheer power of "The Resistance" is a don't-miss track, and the hopeful reminder of "Farther Along" is among Garrels' strongest offerings to date. In the end, it's the best work for a true artist in every sense of the word. ~~[SMALL VOICE] MATT CONNER~~

DAVID BAZAN

STRANGE NEGOTIATIONS

It's tempting to now hear every David Bazan song through his denunciation of Christianity. He made that spiritual break fully evident on his previous solo album, *Curse Your Branches* and, sad and dispiriting as it often was, the former Pedro The Lion/Headphones leader couldn't have made apostasy sound much more tuneful. For his second outing under his own name, Bazan returns to a rock band sound reminiscent of PTL in its more fleshed out form. Yes, there's some God-knocking here, but here the singer ponders his agnosticism in relation to his fam' and friends, many of whom still believe. Those ruminations make for some of his heaviest and most danceable work to date. And he pushes his voice to new limits as he sorts his place out in the world. But he also touches upon his bout wth alcoholism ("Messes," "Don't Change") and ends the album getting vulnerably tender in "Won't Let Go," a love song to his wife. Listeners who have the faith the singer forsook may be inspired to pray for him, especially amidst the occasional coarse language he employs, but Bazan remains masterful at concocting heady indie pop, however the Almighy might figure into it ... or not. ~~[BARSUK] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

A SEQUENCE OF GHOSTS

HOSTAGES

A Sequence of Ghosts have made an impressively strong follow-up to their self-titled EP debut, releasing *Hostages*, a five-song EP teeming with Spirit-filled hardcore and metal in the tradition of heavyweights. The album embodies a sound and message that should speed up the four-piece band's emergence to move outward and garner recognition all over. "The Enabler," the gashing first track, gives a hearing of ASOG intensity via drummer William Steffen's thunder and Jesse Conn's vocal fire. There aren't any flat spots on this record. ~~[ASOG] CHARLIE STEFFENS~~

ALTARMOTIVE

AFTERGLOW

Altarmotive's new album, *Afterglow*, starts off with a fast-paced drum beat mixed with some fast worship guitars and gives listeners the feel of being at a live worship service. That's exactly what *Afterglow* is – a rock/worship album. Produced by Jim Ward (At the Drive-In, Sparta, Sleepercar), Fans of Hillsong United or other worship bands will not be disappointed. *Afterglow* offers multiple quick, upbeat worship songs as well as some mellow and peaceful, slow worship songs, which show Altarmotives' artistic versatility. "Here I Am," the sixth song on the record, is perhaps the standout track. Though soft and light, the song serves as a praise anthem and will be stuck in your head, trust me. This is also the point where the album seems to pick up a lot of steam and become very catchy. Each song from here on out will stick in the listener's head like you wouldn't believe. ~~[SUN CITY] REGGIE EDWARDS~~

AS HELL RETREATS

VOLITION

If you're just hearing about the Tennessee native band As Hell Retreats, don't waste your time. *Volition* is the band's second album, and just like the first it's a weak attempt at the hardcore/metalcore genre. This album's sound seems to be a rip-off of bands like A Plea for Purging, Mychildren Mybride and Impending Doom. They over-use the distorted bass that seems to be very prevalent in the scene these days. Not only that (but), some of the songs are so slow it's at risk of putting the listener to sleep. The only things that kept me awake were the occasional guitar solo and well-done vocals. As Hell Retreats is on this year's *Scream The Prayer 2011 Tour*, and I hope their live performance is a better representation of the band than this album. ~~[ANGR] MATTHEW LEONARD (TMIH)~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
August Burns Red *Leveler*	04	04
Relient K *K is for Karaoke*	04	04
Call To Preserve *Validation*	04	04
Josh Garrels *Love & War & the Sea in Between*	04	05
David Bazan *Strange Negotiations*	03*	04
A Sequence of Ghosts *Hostages*	03*	04
Altarmotive *Afterglow*	03	03*
As Hell Retreats *Volition*	04	02
Red Fist Revolution *The Fall of Goliath*	03*	03*
Deas Vail/Farewell Flight *Split EP*	03	04
These Hearts *Forever Ended Yesterday*	03*	03
Romero *The Awakening*	03	02*
Sleeping Giant *Kingdom Days in an Evil Age*	04	04
Phinehas *thegodmachine*	03*	03*
Jonathan Jones *Community Group*	04	04
Burlap to Cashmere *S/T*	03	04
My Epic *Broken Voice*	03*	04

RED FIST REVOLUTION

THE FALL OF GOLIATH

The Fall of Goliath is all over the place, but not in a bad way. Ben Stewart has found a style and made it work for his songs. Not a single song sounds alike, and the lyrics constantly change, in style, meaning and tempo. Much like the lyrics, the music is bouncing around between styles, with guitars, pianos, synthesizers and loops. Ben Stewart put a lot of time, energy and thought into this album, and it shows. ~~[YOUNGSIDE] TONY D. BRYANT~~

DEAS VAIL/FAREWELL FLIGHT

SPLIT EP

The four tracks on the new split EP from Deas Vail and Farewell Flight offer up decent takes on what each band offers. Together, you could classify both as pop/rock, but that denies the emotion of one (Deas Vail) and the polish of the other (Farewell Flight). "Gone" is the highlight from Deas Vail, which continues the soaring rock tendencies fans are already used to from albums like *All The Houses Look The Same*. They're steady here, yet ever earnest – a trait I doubt they'll ever abandon. Farewell Flight moves between grounded and elevated between their two tracks and that distinction between "Out For Blood" and "Ten Steps In" provides a good range and preview for their upcoming LP. The EP release should do well to whet fans' appetites with new tunes while also prepping the media to look for more. A solid strategy for all involved. ~~[MONO VS. STEREO] MATT CONNER~~

THESE HEARTS

FOREVER ENDED YESTERDAY

These Hearts is the start of the new direction their label is going. With an album produced by Craig Owens, *Forever Ended Yesterday* is expected to capture the winds from fellow labelmates. The album fails to open its sails and catch the stream. The vocals are either too high or too low and the album seems rushed. The band lands in the safe zone of casual fans, but this young band needs to grow. ~~[VICTORY] TONY D. BRYANT~~

ROMERO

THE AWAKENING

There is not much that separates Romero from the pack in *The Awakening*. Solid guitars lead this album, followed by great drums, all to be drowned out by the vocals. The lyrics and the message are very strong and the grunting and squeals cut some of the words off. However, there are parts of the album that just want to make you nod your head and play along with your air instrument. ~~[WARCLUB] TONY D. BRYANT~~

SLEEPING GIANT

KINGDOM DAYS IN AN EVIL AGE

If there's a single adjective I would attribute to those whom have been called missional forerunners to this generation's underground hardcore movement, it is: bold. Continuing forward in the same theologically unapologetic vein, Sleepy G's militancy resounds ever more distinctly as Soldier's worship. Right off the bat, the production quality in *KDIAEA* supercedes anything SG has previously released. Musically, there is both progression and progressive re-creation. Songs like "Defiance" (with it's indigenous drum-heavy drive) & "Enthroned" touch new, haunting, nearly-droning-zone-out sing-chants, while "The Cross Is Suicide" and "ICXC" reach back into "Sons Of Thunder" and "Blame It On The Holy Rollers" fusions. Emmure's Frankie Palmeri pulverizes the already threatening "Eyes Wide Open" during a guest spot screaming, "You better pray!" At times I struggle over the practical outworking of SG's "call to arms" in these kingdom days, but despite openhanded doctrinal differences, I cannot deny that the language here is Godward; the majority of it a list of praiseworthy attributes: love and justice; mercy and holiness. "Sons need fathers…" ("Father To The Fatherless") is a great call to biblical fatherhood, and talk of Jesus as king and conqueror is a refreshing reminder that our Savior isn't all multicolored Easter eggs and crappy t-shirts in an overbearingly effeminate Christianity. They wanted to create a worship album, and they did. ~~[ANGR] LEVI MACALLISTER~~

PHINEHAS

THEGODMACHINE

Phinehas will soon be releasing their debut LP, *thegodmachine*, a very heavy, in-your-face metal record that will not leave listeners disappointed. From the very beginning, the music will get your adrenaline pumping, head banging and make you want to start a circle pit. "The Wishing Well" offers a break in the hard-hitting sound and gives listeners a glimpse into the band's other creative sides, much like "Collapsing" from Demon Hunter's last record. The guys from Phinehas have a lot to offer on *thegodmachine*. They remind me of an early Avenged Sevenfold from their *Waking the Fallen* days. The guitars are outstanding; the drums have a double-bass effect that can vibrate the eardrums if listened to on the right octaves and, as if that wasn't enough, the vocals – whether singing, screaming or growling – will resonate with the listener from song to song and long after the album ends. ~~[RED CORD] REGGIE EDWARDS~~

JONATHAN JONES

COMMUNITY GROUP

Jonathan Jones, formerly of Waking Ashland and We Shot the Moon, funded his latest project via the Kickstarter route, so the *Community Group* name sticks well. While I'm sure Jones appreciates the people around him, the title takes away from the incredible amount of solo talent on display on Jones' latest album that largely relies on a bedroom feel to accompany its pop structures to lure the listener in. The album has a romantic appeal to it that makes the entire affair feel quite intimate. Sure, there are epic moments like "East Coast Feelings" and the quirkiness displayed on "Duracell," but even then it feels like you're wrapped up completely in Jones' world. "The Living Dead" is perhaps the best tune, with swirling guitars a la Beach House that work well with Jones' buoyant piano work. There's lots to say about an album so personal and yet so inventive, but suffice to say, Jones has something special here. ~~[JONATHAN JONES MUSIC] MATT CONNER~~

BURLAP TO CASHMERE

S/T

Burlap to Cashmere has returned with a new self-titled album after more than a decade away. Back in the early nineties the band made waves with their accomplished live show and exceptional musicianship on 1998's release, *Anybody Out There*, garnering them a rabid cult following. The musical landscape has changed quite a bit in the intervening years. While the audience expects honest and poignant lyrics from their folk-influenced artists (insert your Mumford's and Avett's here), the Mediterranean percussion and rhythms that so defined their early work have gone the way of Rusted Root. Being consummate musicians, B to C have updated their sound to the times. The songs are stripped down, yet still retain that exotic essence that so defines their sound. The recording is warm and immediate, the playing top-notch. Burlap to Cashmere may not break new ground, but it feels like the return of an old friend – always a welcome quality. ~~[JIVE] MIKE HOGAN~~

MY EPIC

BROKEN VOICE

The official definition of *Broken Voice* is that it's a series of leftover cuts that didn't make My Epic's 2010 release, *Yet*. That's an unfair designation. The reality is that the largely acoustic turns on *Broken Voice* are beautiful on their own, especially the thundering dark of "Alone." Aaron Stone's songwriting remains at its peak here, and My Epic adds another facet to their artistry. ~~[FACEDOWN] MATT CONNER~~

More album reviews on page 49 (and at hmmag.com)

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Twenty-Seventh)

We've been exploring in this series answers as to why millions of Evangelical Americans have produced so few examples of quality art in any artistic category, seeing that this is largely due to limited (and/or distorted) views of Biblical teaching (or a failure to act on the implications of its teachings), despite the fact that Holy Writ instructs Christians in "every good work" (2 Tim. 3: 16-17), which works of necessity include the making of art.

We looked at the negative effects of such theologically deficient perspectives on the doctrines of Creation and Eschatology, which result in denigrations of the physical world and time as appropriate theaters of God's Purposes, encouraging pessimism concerning history, and viewing the world as Satan's realm which needs only to be escaped from, rather than redeemed and fulfilled.

We saw also that sub-Biblical views on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity led to a destruction of Scriptural justification of symbol as simultaneously showing forth both multiple meanings and unified meaning. Such views lead as well to the reduction of men from the mysterious bearers of God's Image to simplistic machines amenable to quick-fix formulae.

We then turned to look at the implications of the Incarnation of Christ, in which God, in the Second Person of the Trinity, joined Himself to a fully Human Nature and Body so that He could be the Perfect Sacrifice to atone for the sins of mankind by dying in fallen humanity's place. This Eternal Joining of God to Man in Christ Jesus is summed up by the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) when it wrote that He is "at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood. Truly God and truly Man…"

We've seen how this aberrant view of the Incarnation can lead to devaluation of the fact of Christ's Growth and Human Development, which in turn discounts the valuation of regular human growth in time as unimportant to God's Purposes, so that men are seen in a deformed fashion.

The devaluation of Christ's Humanity is artistically destructive in other ways, as well. For instance, an improper view of the Lord Jesus' Emotions And His Imagination (intrinsic as they are to His Humanity) leads to both an improper view of the value of human emotion and imagination (leading to a deformed representation of men in worship and the arts, and to a mistrust of the arts as legitimate and an inability to correctly understand and execute what Scripture prescribes).

Likewise, such a non-Biblical devaluation of these Aspects of Jesus' Humanity can extend as well to His Sensual Nature, Which, as a Human, He possessed, as do all humans. The five senses (taste, touch, smell, hearing, and sight) are necessarily a part of embodied humanity (since humans do possess bodies which are one part of who humans are), and the Lord Jesus, Who has redeemed all that He assumed, in order to be a Perfect Sacrifice for the sins of fallen humanity, and Who was an Embodied Human, necessarily possessed these senses.

There has long been a strain of suspicion of the senses in Christianity, which owes its existence to two things. The first is rooted in Neo-Platonic distrust of the physical, material realm as being inherently at odds with the spiritual realm, a distrust transmitted to the Early Church via biases of Neo-Platonically-educated Christians.

The second contributory to suspicion of the senses (especially amongst Evangelicals) is due to a Pietistic overreaction to the very real problem of sensualism, the illicit worship of the senses seen in hedonism, gluttony, and so forth. The Pietist response to these sinful patterns of behavior is to throw the baby out with the bath-water, and seek to suppress the senses as much as possible.

However, Scripture itself tells us that the physical (which necessarily includes the sensual) is the arena of spirituality, as Rom. 12:1-2 makes clear when Paul urges Christians to present their bodies (including perforce their senses) as "living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, your spiritual service." We are not called to obliterate our humanity, but to see it oriented to righteousness by the Spirit's Power, to use our gifts (sensual and otherwise) correctly.

We see this especially illumined in the Sinless Life of Christ, Who exhibited use of His Senses as a Holy and Necessary Part of His Redemptive Human Activity, since All of Who He was and What He did was offered for our sins in His Atonement on the Cross.

The Bible teaches us that Jesus tasted (Mt. 27:34), and exercised sight (Mark 3:16; 4:18), the sense of touch (Luke 5:13; 7:14), and of hearing (Matt.4:12; Luke 7:9), all as part of His Sinless Human Existence. His Sinless Exercise of His Sensual Nature shows us that a godly exercise of our own senses is both possible and necessary for our sanctification if we are to imitate our Lord.

A suspicion of the senses inhibits both the creation of Christian art and worship (since both are unavoidably concerned with sensual exercise). To despise the Sensual Nature of Christ's Incarnation inevitably leads to the paucity of Christian artistic expression such as we sadly experience in our time.

[kempercrabb.net]

Guest editorial by Chad Johnson

Sparks

We experience seasons (like our recent trip to Bogotá, Colombia) where such a high degree of God-sized activity is in motion, making His hand easily discernible. These times are what we define as the mountaintops. Mountain peaks give us broad perspective over circumstances. From the top, valleys are only crossing points to the next peak. I find it easier to believe God for great fruit when traveling the world than when walking through the isles of my every-day life. Should this be? Jesus came to give us life: life to the full.

It can be dangerous (and likely even wrong) to avoid the valleys. Mountains are hard places to live; the air is hard to breathe, water is scarce and supplies are nearly non-existent. It becomes easy to question our faith, wander into sin and fall away from God when we're living in the valley. It's important to be reminded that we all go through incredibly great times and devastatingly challenging ones. Life is not consistent. God is. A month or so ago I had hit a low point. I began questioning why, in some cases, I had seen God accomplish so much through me and a mere few days later, I wasn't "seeing" or "experiencing" Him at all. How deceiving my five senses can be. It was a cold Saturday afternoon and I found myself alone in an empty home. I felt the Lord desiring to speak to my heart. There are times when I sense His presence, reach for my iPhone, and begin typing a simple note to self; this was the result:

Son, I love that you read My Word today. But have you talked to Me? Have you listened to My voice? Have we communed together? I never define our relationship by what good you can do for Me or bring Me. I define it by what good Christ has already brought Me, this includes you. I love you with more passion than the world could ever know. Let My love flow out of you, let it flow freely. When My love touches the world, nothing can get in the way. When your love touches the world, it's still all about you. I have to do it through you. I desire time with you as more vital than anytime you could spend on others. Spend time with Me and I'll spend Me on you and everyone you touch.

The fruit is not our identity, Christ is. Fruit is simply an overflow of Christ in us … working His way back out. Foolishness is chasing after encounters with others before pursuing our daily encounter with God. I want to see even more people saved, healed, set free, experiencing the supernatural love of God the Father, Jesus the Son via the power of the Holy Spirit.

If you haven't yet done it, begin reading and soaking up the Word. Put in worship music that inspires your soul and meditate on the good promises of His Word. Talk to Him. Listen. Let Him talk to you. Know that you are loved. Let love be the overflow of your intimate relationship with Jesus. Jesus, please be the spark that sets my world ablaze.

—Chad Johnson
comeandlive.com

John 15: 16 – "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you. And appointed you to bear fruit – fruit that will last…"

Devotions with Greg Tucker

"I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some."
–words of the Apostle Paul recorded in 1 Corinthians 9:22

I was the bombdiggity at Reagan-Lynn Elementary School recently. It was Career Day, and on stage were our city's mayor, a police officer, a scuba diver and a Starbucks manager who brought samples to smell. Then you had me, a simple pastor. I preach, I pray, and I counsel.

Now, in my opinion pastoring is a noble profession – a sincere honor you're either called to, or not – but it's hard for clergy to impress a bunch of kids more interested in recess than Revelation.

After hearing from the most powerful man in the city, staring open-mouthed at a dude with a gun and getting jacked-up on coffee bean aroma, these students looked at me with a uniform glare that said, "Mister, you're the only thing coming between us and a scuba diver. Move it along!"

We did our group presentation four times, and the first three were painfully identical until one boy raised his hand and said, "So, do you have any famous people at your church?" Before I could filter it, the discouraged side of me blurted, "Do you consider Johnny Depp famous?"

It was a fair question. Not related to his, obviously, but a fair question.

Apparently, Johnny Depp was on his list of stars, and suddenly I owned the room. Every hand shot up – including a few from my fellow panel members – and one by one I deflected each query with a carefully worded reply.

"Pastor Tucker, what is Johnny Depp like?"
I explain that he wears funny clothes sometimes, and he's allergic to chocolate. (I think I saw that last part in *People Magazine*.)

"How tall is he?"
Well, obviously everyone looks larger on the big screen, so I explain that. Then I say they would be surprised at his height if they saw him at church. We both would.

After exhausting my limited knowledge of someone I'd never met, I bowed to the next speaker, who paled by comparison. In fact, when the day ended and students were asked to identify the career that interested them most, the overwhelming reply was pastor.

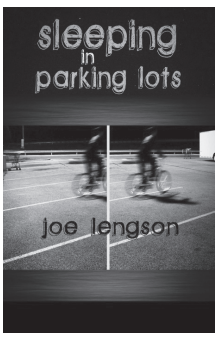
To God be the glory… Right? Maybe not.

The Bible instructs us to win the lost, and it's understood that part of that means being well regarded by those we're trying to reach. But God's command is given with this footnote: Don't set aside your integrity in the process. In other words, be likable without lying.

A Christian's life is attractive on its own merit, identified by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control, according to Galatians 5:22-23. (Note the absence of judgmental, proud, and competitive on that list.) Ultimately, the real story of what God has done for you is more interesting – and far more effective – than anything you could ever make up.

PS - Johnny Depp's birthday is June 9. The church may, or may not, throw a surprise birthday party. (D'oh! There I go again!)

Greg Tucker pastors Hope Community Church of Anaheim and is president of Tucker Signature Films in Beverly Hills. You can email him at TuckerG@mac.com



Sleeping in Parking Lots

[AN EXCERPT]

By Joe Lengson of Mychildren Mybride

WHEN I WAS a kid, I was baptized. This is one of my earliest memories. There was a priest there and he only spoke Spanish. There were a group of older people in robes speaking Spanish, I was scared and confused. I don't really remember much, but I do remember getting scared when the old Mexican priest would look at me. I didn't know what the point of the whole thing was. Since I had no idea what the heck was going on, I assumed it was some kind of experiment of some kind, I didn't like it. However, after the baptism, my mom got us a big cake and then I was happy. Later on in life, I learned what baptisms are actually for. Baptisms are fundamentally the final step to give your life to Christ completely after learning and confessing and all that stuff. I suppose when people are baptized, that means that they are claimed as God's. The band had one final step left.

The band undoubtedly progressed from the lukewarm Christian band when I first joined, to a full force ministry band. A lot has changed, we as individuals and as a business. After that big Christian tour, we finally got managers. We met our managers on the big summer tour and officially became business partners a few weeks after negotiating a deal. The band never had a manager and we just always acted as our own manager. We enjoyed not having managers because that meant more money for us. The less we had to pay managers, the more I got out of debt.

The managers would come in and handle all of our financial affairs as well as equipment endorsements, publicity, promotion, essentially everything. It's nice not to worry about anything like that, but it's not nice to watch my weekly pay reduce. But I was told, with managers, in the long run, pay would increase because they would get us on bigger tours and market us more than we ever could. Our band was only growing bigger and bigger since then. I am not saying I think that my band is the best thing to ever happen to the world, in fact; I still believe our band isn't that big, or great, though in fact we have gotten pretty lucky when it comes to landing big tours.

Over that summer, I learned that I am a very minuscule piece of matter in this extensive world. I am just one point in space and time. I've seen and met so many people and each person plays a particular role in this world. That's a really hard concept for people to grasp. In my mind, I feel insignificant, but possibly to someone else, I'm just the opposite. I once talked with this one kid after a show in New York and he said he feels useless because he can't find a job, but he was in a band. He's not useless because he's in that band; he's doing something for the world. It's perception of yourself from others. You have a completely different outlook on yourself than the world does. Because one feels useless, or ugly, or unimportant, or heartbroken, doesn't mean it's fact. There's a difference between feeling an emotion and actually encompassing that certain condition. There's a difference between feeling sad and actually being sad.

People everywhere need to realize that just because they are feeling a certain emotion doesn't mean that they don't have a purpose anymore. I understand it's easy for people to blow things out of proportion. So since I was trying to be a better Christian, this was something I had been trying to get across to kids; that they are worth so much more than they realize.

Coca-Cola, Girls & Nostalgia

Volume 1: Why should the devil have all the good music

Guest column by Matt Francis

I realize I am not the best person to talk about nostalgia.

I realize this because I do not drink Coca-Cola. Nostalgic people drink Coca-Cola, or Coca-Cola is nostalgia. I see this in commercials on the rare occasions I actually watch liveTV with commercials.

Here is another fact about me. I was pretty blind to music for a long time. Of the great spectrum of music over the entire history of recorded sounds, I had a very small sliver. Mostly I had the sliver that was accessible at the Family Christian Bookstore. In reality, it is impressive I have any grasp on music beyond Christian radio circa 1990.

There was no great musical guru showing me the way. My mom use to have good taste in music (she still owns vinyl from artists with names like "Beatles" and "Beach Boys" that most concede are pretty good) but it digressed. My dad never had good taste in music as far as I can tell. Much of my childhood was pre-internet and gradually entered into the advent of dial-up connections for lower-middle class households. Therefore, my options for musical discovery included: a.) the radio. I never got to control the radio, so as mentioned, the dial was stuck on Christian adult contemporary, b.) my parents music collection, which mostly consisted of cassette tapes cataloguing what was available on Christian AC radio, c.) the Christian Bookstore, which stocked mostly what was on Christian AC radio, but also had a small "alternative" section for angry conservative prepubescents and a listening area where you could select demo tapes off the rack for album preview, d.) my brother's taste in music, which actually proved surprisingly helpful. Later, music festivals would factor in greatly.

Now, there are two things to remember when confined to this select market. A lot of it is bad, watered-down knock offs and even if you climb to the top of the pile, it is still ultimately poor quality, but a lesser-evil poor quality. But also, some of it was pretty awesome.

Christians are weird. They need to exist in their own sub-culture and overcharge for CD's (how this is related, I'll never know). They actually had charts on the wall to specify which popular "secular" artists were being ripped off in a quantitatively less quality clone versions with Jesus-loving lyrics. So if you liked Sheryl Crow under the "fan of mainstream artist" column, you would slide your finger left to the accompanying Christian artist, in this case being Amy Grant. Woo, thank God we avoided such trite songs about how all we want to do is have some fun for the theological heavyweight that is "Baby Baby". According to this soul-saving chart, Christian's had their own "U2, Coldplay, and Sarah McLachlen" in Jar of Clay (barely avoiding Bono's faux-religious humanitarian musings) 3 Doors Down in Casting Crowns (can Christians still call it cock rock?), even a Christian equivalent to mainstream Tupac in artist BB Jay (probably with less gang-violence but a similar level of resurrection)!

So all's that to say is Christian's can still get down and dirty, angry and aggressive with equivalents to Slipknot, Gun N Roses, Limp Bizkit and Marilyn Manson (well, not Manson, that's just the devil's music clearly) in slightly less aggressive and not angry-cause-we're-saved heavy metal and rap-rock bastardizations. This chart has been handy for conservative parents and youth pastors for years to steer kids off of the wide road leading to destruction and Columbine shootings and onto the narrow road leading to salvation and Skillet concerts (oh yeah they still wear eye-liner!).

How did I survive this? Well, some would argue that I haven't. But mainly, it was when my brother queued up a demo tape of MxPx's *Life In General* and told me to listen to it, interrupting my perusal of the pre-teen fiction. Wally McDoogal had to wait, and this proved a transcendent moment in my life. Not because MxPx were necessarily innovators of the brand of music they played (left-coast punk, a term they coined) but because I had never been exposed to anything that had remotely the speed of their percussion, the distortion-tainting their guitars, the emotion and delivery of front-man Mike Herrera (read: I had never heard Social Distortion) or lyrical topics such as irresponsibility, refusal to grow up, girls, veiled references to drinking, and driving the open road.

What! That's crazy! 95% of music covers those subjects. 75% of all music is about girls alone! Springsteen has been singing songs above driving the open road nearly 30 years before, and he wasn't the first. The Who covered adversity to growing old in the 60's, with the Beatles and Buddy Holly and [inset any classic artist here] singing about girls and heartbreak and girls. It is so obvious; people actually make music about what most people actually think about (I was going to specify 13 year old boys, but then I realized at 26 my mind is still occupied with pretty much the same things). Yet I was stuck listening to songs about keeping prayer in school, joy, the Lord, the joy of the Lord, and over-cheesy songs from fathers to daughters about eyelash swatting.

Hearing the opening to "Middlename," the first track on *Life In General*, was like falling down the rabbit hole. It was like a bonobo chimp raised in captivity being released into the wild, and that wild was punk rock. "Emo-shuuun.....is my middle name!!!!!!" and suddenly i can see the Matrix for the first time. There's a bigger world out there.

Slowly Going The Way of The Buffalo, MxPx's 4th full-length, was the first album I ever purchased. It was 17 bucks in 1998, which not adjusted for inflation but for a thirteen year-olds summer lawnmowing money, equals $1,000 in 2011 mediafire money.

And it was worth every penny.

Matt Francis writes for a blog called skateboardchampion.com and he plays drums in a band called Feral Conservatives. You can reach him at mfrancisfilm.com

Greetings from Chiang Mai, Thailand

My name is Gary Lansdowne. My wife and I are with Youth With A Mission, which is an international, interdenominational Christian missions organization. I have been a volunteer with YWAM since 1991; my wife since 1994. The main emphasis of what we do is Music Outreach and Mercy Services.

Since 1996, we have helped various Christian rock bands from 14 Countries play in 10 different Nations. Most musicians we have worked with you probably would not know. The best known artists that we have had the privledge of working with is Blindside (Sweden), Andy Hunter (UK) and Disciple (USA).

What could a musician on a mission's trip do with an acoustic guitar in Thailand?

1) Play at Burmese Migrant Schools

2) Teach Guitar in Migrant Schools

3) Play Mae La Refugee Camp at: Church, School, Orphanage, Bible School

4) Play at Aiya Venue or One Way Coffee Shop

Saturday…bus ride from Mae Sot to Chiang Mai and play Won Gen Café

Sunday…depart Chiang Mai

Something to consider

If you are interested in how you or your band can be involved with a Music & Missions outreach in Thailand, please contact us at: **circuitryderrock@gmail.com**

For other info: **www.myspace.com/circuitryder**
Thailand phone number: 0066-847712831

With their feet wet, bodies rested and minds now at ease, **HANDS** are ready for their next album.

"Really, we wrote *Creator* over two years ago," explains frontman Shane Ochsner, "and still getting our feet wet as a band. It was our first album with Facedown, so we were feeling the pressure to try and appeal to the Facedown crowd, with the heavy hitters and there were a lot of different factors that came in when writing *Creator*."

"We wrote an album called *The Sounds of Earth*... We wrote that in August of 2008, and recorded it in September of 2008 the very next month. Right after we recorded that we started writing for *Creator*, because we only had about a month to write. We were pretty much burnt out."

"As to where this one ... we had two years to grow and condition since then. Two years is a lot of time, you know. Find different influences, kind of changes your whole perspective on music and how they perceive it, and this album ... it was kind of a ... we are going to do what we want to do. As long as we like and we're happy with it, then let it roll."

"We have definitely matured as people and musicians, and are influenced by different things. Over the last two years especially being on the road and seeing how people react, finding out what else about a band people really enjoy."

With the foundation in place and everything settling in, "Give Me Rest" is filled with thought, experience, and freedom. "The pressure is definitely off. We didn't have to impress anybody and didn't have to put anything on it." Talking about the relief of stress and pressure. "More freedom and more fun in our heads. We know that we don't have to go on the road, we don't have to sell a bunch of records, we don't have to go on tour with heavy metalcore bands and hope to catch some of their fans. We just don't have to do that."

Shane continues about all the stress that is no longer present. "Whoever wants to like it and whoever doesn't – that's fine. We're not too worried anymore, we're not trying to sell a bunch of records, or trying to make a bunch of money. We're very, very into it for the music and the message. I think it translates very well on the album. It is way less metalcore and a lot more melodic and very cool and climactic.

"We don't have any sort of expectations right now. The band is secondary, as to before the band was first and everything. We were doing everything for the band and all this stuff. We're at a point now where the band is on the side of what we do with our normal lives and normal jobs. The pressure is definitely off. When you write with that mentality, I wonder what kind of kids this is going to appeal to, 'we need to put a catchy chord here, oh we need a break down here.' This and that, this and that."

"THE PRESSURE IS DEFINITELY OFF."

"We all have all-around different tastes. Josh is really into old school, Christian, hippie, Rock 'n' Roll type stuff." Talking about the influences. "I'm the main writer and I control the writing. And I'm mostly influenced by a variety of music. Especially bands like Jimmy Eats World, or one of these bands from the 90's, one of my favorite bands ever (is) called CRUMB, and they all have awesome elements, that, yeah, influence me at times. How it all ties in to this metal stuff we are doing, I'm sure you can hear it somewhere. There are not a whole lot of catchy bands that I'm influenced by. I used to listen to that a lot growing up, but nowadays I do not really care so much for it. But I definitely do enjoy one's variety, but that's a different kind of heavy to me."

"The engineer is a friend of mine from Kansas City. His name is Josh Barber." Discussing the recording process. "With me having a job here in Kansas City, and my wife and I just had a baby a few months ago, there was no question of do we go to a studio somewhere else. It was, 'We need to find a studio here in Kansas City,' you know. Because I need to be home, and Josh is super, super talented and from knowing him and talking about doing this album with him, for several months... We must have talked about this thing for six or seven months straight."

"I was confident that he could pull it off. Honestly, it was such a great experience. It was just him and I in the studio. I recorded everything. Drums, guitar, bass, the whole record. Just me and Josh our engineer in the studio for a month and half straight. Bringing these songs to life. It was awesome, and a great experience. I think the quality of the album and everything else compared to whatever else we've done is great. So it is everything we wanted to do, and I think it sounds just the way we hoped it would sound."

"Cornerstone Festival, we will have all the albums at Cornerstone, since we're not touring." When asked about a release show. "As of right now we only get to play three shows a year: Facedown Fest, Cornerstone Fest and Sonshine Festival in Minnesota. So, if there is any event that is going to kick this thing off, it is going to be Cornerstone Festival this year. Then, two weeks later, Sonshine Festival."

When discussing a dream concert, Shane ponders, "Lets see, I don't know, that is a tough call. There is a show that happened two years ago. I am like a crazy Jimmy Eats World fan. They are literally my favorite band of all time. In 2009, they did a 10-show tour called the *Clarityx10 Tour*, because they put out an album called the *Clarity* in 1999.

"In 2009 they played 10 shows, and played their *Clarity* album front to back. And I missed that show, because we had a show scheduled on one of the same nights. And that is maybe one of my biggest regrets ever. I'm sure with time and everything else, but that was (a) once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. If there is anything I can do or any show I could go to I would bring my self back to 2009 and go to that show. I love that band to death, man. Every record, demo, everything – I've got it all. I just feel like that, their sound and what they do – every element about it – just influences me in every way. I know everyone sort of has that band; most musicians have that one band they can't live without. So that's it for me."

✖

BYTONY D. BRYANT

AUGUST BURN

FREAKS AND GEEKS

BY DOUG VAN PELT

METAL IS THE MOST ITS PERSONA HOLDS A – ESPECIALLY WHEN OUT OF A STACK OF A MANUFACTURED, INTO MATHEMATICAL WEAK INDIVIDUALS WITH THE DISTANCE BETWEEN INDEED. AUGUST BURNS WITH THE MAJORITY OF THEM WITH ELECTRONIC GAMES.

S RED

POWERFUL FORM OF MUSIC ON EARTH. MASSIVE, LARGER-THAN-LIFE PERCEPTION IT'S SHAKING AND RUMBLING LOUDLY SPEAKER CABINETS. YET METAL IS STILL ARTIFICIAL POWER. IT CAN BE BROKEN DOWN FORMULAS AND PERFORMED BY MEEK AND MORE MENTAL THAN MUSCLE STRENGTH. GEEK AND METAL BEHEMOTH IS VERY SHORT RED GUITARIST JB BRUBAKER COMES UP THE BAND'S TUNES. AND HE COMPOSES BLIPS LIKENED TO EARLY NINTENDO

"JB writes the guitar parts," explains vocalist Jake Luhrs. "He writes it on this software called TabIt. It sounds like Nintendo, like *Mario Kart* or something. He will email that to all of us in the band. It has the basic structure of the song. And then Matt (Greiner) our drummer – he will write drums to it as well. Dustin (Davidson) will pre-record it. He'll learn the song. Throughout listening to the song, we've been doing this same process for years, so we kind of already know what it's going to sound like, even if it sounds like a Nintendo game. So, when we listen to it, we'll be like, 'Eh, we don't really like this part. We don't really like that part.' As this whole process is happening, we'll talk about the song, section by section. Dustin/Jason/Justin does pre-production, so he'll throw some fake drums under there. He'll record all the guitar parts, and therefore we'll have a more updated version of the song. Then we'll come into practice and we'll pick out some lyrics that we feel works well with the songs. Then I'll go home to my patterns and that's kind of how we just do it. We just build from there."

This process is working, as the breakneck speed of tunes like "Internal Cannon" and the title-track of *Leveler* will attest. Guitars scale up and down the neck like ants scrambling at the sight of a can or Raid (i.e., at blurry-high speeds), the drums hammer the crap out of the snare drum as the kick gets savagely beat. ABR is at the top of their game.

"I don't believe we've hit our peak yet," Luhrs adds.

The Deluxe Edition packaging of *Leveler* has a special bonus track of the song "Empire" that pulls down the curtain on the band's unique songwriting process. "It's not the pre-pro that Dustin did," explains Luhrs, "but it's actually the Nintendo TabIt sound. If you get the Deluxe Edition, you'll hear what it sounds like. It really does sound like a Nintendo game. We kind of just imagine in our heads as real guitars, real drums."

That's pretty impressive for a group of five guys, who probably don't imagine the exact same sounds, but these Pennsylvania residents claim that they seldom argue and fight about such things. "We might have debates and things, but we basically have a voting process. If anything starts to get heated, we'll just take a vote and that'll squash it." Good thing it's a five-piece instead of an even number. It probably explains why they can walk into a studio on Valentine's Day and be mixing in less than 30 days.

"It was a very diverse album for me," Luhrs states. "Looking back I'll probably remember how spiritual and important the lyrics are to me. I was way more involved on the lyrics for this record. The subject matter was very personal to me on things I hold close to my heart."

When pressed for immediate stand-outs the aggressive frontman pinpointed "Salt and Light," with its ringing counter-notes on guitar and staccato drumming. "It's basically like a worship song to God. I like the lyrics and the sing-along part."

"Empire" is the album's first single. "I like the sing-along part to that as well," he admits. "The song 'Leveler,' which is the last song on the record, is a song about forgiveness. It's kind of a personal story from my background, so that's important to me. I like every song musically. If I didn't, I don't think it'd be on this record. We sit down and really are very careful as to what we have in our songs and what we don't have. So, we all come to an agreement whether the song's good or not. I like the record. We wrote what we wanted to write."

Apparently the album artwork doesn't exactly fully encapsulate the theme of the album or its title track. "I think *Leveler* means something different to everyone in the band. Matt came up with that idea… God's going to level the field and take whatever's wrong – (and) make it right. I think that kind of went with just everything being wrong – showing things just being leveled. So, the actual concept of what *Leveler* meant to Matt is not necessarily the concept of the album artwork. People are going to see a car being flipped over in a swamp, a house being leveled. It's just destruction. What we believe is that all that is destruction and bad is going to be flipped over and made right."

Greiner is also the one Luhrs credits with inspiring the dark tune, "Divisions," which parallels a dark and sad time in the drummer's past. "It's basically a sad story about him doing something that he looks back on now and just realizes how destructive it was to other people around him and how he just went to God to ask for forgiveness. Just to understand the situation on a deeper level. The song is very raspy and dirty and raw and very gutter. So we thought that a song built on kind of hating yourself and asking for forgiveness and asking for restoration (would be good). We felt like those lyrics could fit well with the raw sound."

Luhrs' vocal performance on "Divisions" has been questioned by some. "I've gotten lots of complaints from kids saying, 'Aw, what happened? Does his voice break on that track? Was he sick?' That wasn't the case at all. What

happened was I was listening to the song and I felt that I wanted to be more emotional with my voice. So I walked in there with (producer, Jason) Suecof and said, 'Just press record. I just really wanna have at it with this song and just really give my heart out and force some of these screams and be more of a man that's really furious and really pissed off with himself more than just some screamer in a band.' I think it turned out really well. What's funny is when I got done with it in the studio, none of the band members were there. I told Jason, 'This isn't going to fly, man. This is too different. Tomorrow morning the band is going to show up and they're going to listen to the song and they're not going to like it. So, I hope I didn't just waste two-and-a-half hours of your time.' So I went back to the hotel. I went to sleep and I woke up and I found out that everybody loved it, so we kept the vocals."

Luhrs reveals that the turmoil in "Internal Cannon" is about wrestling with powerful forces that rear their ugly head in way too many people's lives. "I wrote those lyrics basically about addiction in life and being able to overcome them and kinda putting your foot down on anything that's been an enabler in your life to go down the wrong direction. I guess the backbone for that for me was drinking – alcohol in general. It's in my family. I have a lot of alcoholics in my family and in my history and in past generations. I used to have a really difficult time with drinking when I was younger. I just kind of wanted to kind of build a song for myself to keep myself, basically, in check and a song to remember that you can overcome those kinds of things in your life. Even when alcohol tries to come back into my life in a negative way, I've got this song that I wrote that reminds me of being able to put the bottle down when that becomes an issue. A lot of my lyrics are for kids, but they're also for my self. This is my life and these are the things I'm dealing with. When I wasn't a screamer, but I wanted to be in a band, the only way that I could express my emotions in my life was to write 'em down. So I still do that. Nothing's changed. I don't write for other people, I write for myself. I know that the things that I'm writing, because they're so personal, I know that other people have those same exact problems. So people tend to enjoy my lyrics because it hits home to them and no one else is writing like it."

When asked about the tasteful Latin/Salsa influence in the song, it causes a little laughter. "You'd have to ask JB, man," he defers. "I don't know what was going on. Maybe he didn't get enough sleep. I don't know what he was thinking, but it came out awesome. When I heard it, I was like, 'What is this? What happened? Am I listening to a track of ABR or what?' When everything was said and done, it came together. He had a big vision for that song and that part. I thought it was something different, so I was excited to see what would come of it. I was kinda weary of what direction it was going to go. It ended up great, I thought. I mean, it's definitely not something that we do all the time and it's probably not something that we'll do a lot of, but it's something to spice it up, I guess."

So the band released *Leveler* on June 21 and then hit a few choice European countries (including Russia, Germany and Greece, where Luhrs had "the best food of his life") only to return home for a few days before hitting the headlining stage at *Van's Warped Tour*. This is something he loves. "It's awesome. It's a party. It's a family reunion. It's just a good time. It's probably the best vacation I've ever had in my life. You go out there. You hang out with kids. You hang out with bands you've toured with. When we did it in '08, we went out with As I Lay Dying, Every Time I Die, From First to Last. A bunch of bands we toured with in the past year and then we see 'em at *Warped*. We just hang out and have a good time. Tim Lambesis started a Bible study and we'd do that."

It's been well documented that touring is like a grind that wears at even the most cheerful of persons, but little has been said that accurately portrays the challenges of maintaining a healthy spiritual life in this context. Without acting like he was saying anything revealing or different, Luhrs ripped the blinders off many a romanticizing believer when he shared what it's really like for many on the road.

"It can be difficult at times – especially staying spiritually strong. I'm not saying that other people don't deal with the things that I deal with. That's for sure. Everybody has their issues and a lot of our issues are the same. Just nobody really wants to admit that. It gets really tiresome, because I'm constantly in a party atmosphere. It's like, to be honest, that's the last thing I want to be involved in. You know, I see a lot of band dudes doing drugs. I see a lot of girls degrading themselves night after night with certain band guys. It's just a nasty place. It's not a very bright place. It's kinda dark.

"With that being said, I surround myself with good people; I try not to associate with people that are doing drugs or that are just rock and roll scenes. I tend to have prayer time by myself and time alone. I like to have time alone just to gather my thoughts and to understand what it is I'm really doing out here and put myself in check. I don't have church, so I listen to Mark Driscoll, from Mars Hill in Seattle. He's an amazing pastor. He's probably my favorite. And then I've got Dr. Mike Brown. I listen to their podcasts. I read my Bible. I hang out. Matt and I like to have fellowship a lot. We'll talk and keep each other accountable with just our lives on the road and check in on each other.

"As much as we are family and we are friends, like, it's (an) extremely busy lifestyle and when you're hanging out with your bandmates, you're just joking around all the time. No one wants to talk about real stuff, because: A) you don't have time for it; or B) it's just too hard. It's like, who wants to talk about real heavy stuff when in 30 minutes you've gotta go do soundcheck and then we've gotta play a show two hours from there, but before then we've gotta get food and we've got a signing and then we've gotta fly? You know what I mean? So, we just hang out and talk and laugh just to keep our morale up, but when it comes to touring, it beats you up. It's not as pretty as everybody thinks it is. I think that's one of the reasons why I love *Warped Tour* so much, because I get to see a bunch of guys, have a really good time, but I've got a 45-minute set a day, but I'm not the one who has to drive. I don't have to wake up and do a plane or whatever. I can hang out with these guys and we can have real conversations."

Makes a lot of sense. Not everyone is the same, but many insiders have probably wondered how a band could sit down and get all serious and quiet before a show and then have to ratchet up the energy again before hitting the stage. Luhrs re-focuses his survival tips message: "Prayer is key. If you're a follower of Christ and you have a relationship with God, then you should be praying. You should be communicating with God. I've noticed that when I don't pray to God and I don't talk to God and I'm not really focused on who He wants me to be on a day-to-day routine lifestyle, I start to slide and start thinking about things and doing things that I shouldn't be doing, and it's all there at my fingertips if I want it, unfortunately. That's tour, I guess."

✖

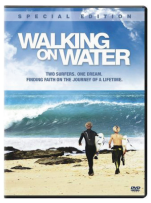
Pictured L-R: Matt Greiner; JB Brubaker; Jake Luhrs; Dustin Davidson; Brent Rambler. Photos by Cory Morton

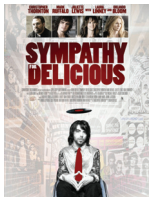
THE WHOSOEVERS

This awesome, wall-destroying ministry handed these DVDs out at Cornerstone Festival this summer. If you weren't there, find out how to get one or watch it on their site. This thing is edited well and it hits hard with the message of love and healing in the face of anything (destruction, drugs). It's only 11:52 minutes long, but it doesn't waste a second. [thewhosoevers.com] *Doug Van Pelt*
[Cuss: 0.1 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

WALKING ON WATER

Hot on the increased interest in surfing films (*Soul Surfer* and *Blue Crush 2*), this documentary tells the warm story of a pro surfer paying it forward by mentoring some hot young talent on an across-the-globe surf trip. [Sony Pictures] *DV*
[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]



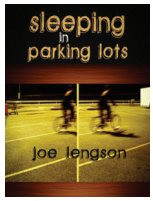


SYMPATHY FOR DELICIOUS

A handicapped turntablist suddenly receives the gift of healing. He lays hands on people and they get healed, but he can't heal himself. He gets pulled by people that want to benefit from the gift. Some close to him tell him that it's a gift that he can't prostitute. He walks away from it all for rock music ... and then he mixes the two. Very intriguing, strange and moving. [Maya Entertainment] *DV*
[Cuss: 135 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 2 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

UNANSWERED PRAYERS

While my first reaction to hearing that a movie was based on a Garth Brooks song might be to not watch it, I'm glad I did. This movie shows blondes competing with brunettes, football players competing with one another (without Dad being invited to watch) and a man competing between his own foolish decisions and the desire to save his marriage. Is the ending happy? Do country songs always resolve? The outcome is kept in doubt longer than expected, though. [Sony Pictures] *DV* [Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0.1 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]



SLEEPING IN PARKING LOTS | JOE LENGSON

This book should be called *Sleeping In Parking Lots: The True Diaries of a Wimpy Kid*. From MyChildern MyBride's bassist, this book goes from a high school junior finding God, to his first heart break. From being "the new jack" to becoming a power voice in the Christian metal scene.
[Lulu.com] *Rob Shameless*

FAST LIVING | SCOTT C. TODD, PHD

An amazing tale that gets more exciting with each page – and it's not a story at all! It's a true-blue practical how-to (with reasons why) about the church ending extreme poverty in less than 25 years. Captivating, thrilling and smart. Could be a book that changes the world. For real. If this doesn't spring readers to action, would anything?
[Compassion] *DV*

ORB MUSIC PLAYER

With this device your smart phone or computer becomes a remote control that plays streaming or loaded content through your stereo. Considering the virtually unlimited libraries available online from places like Pandora (or internet radio or even just your itunes collection), it's like having the largest jukebox in the world at your fingertips. It's going to make me want to listen to internet radio stations like never before, because my stereo speakers are heavier than my computer's and I'll be sitting on a couch instead of hunched over a computer desk. Another step forward. [orb.com] *DV*
[Setup Ease: A | Performance: A | Price: $79]

REVEAL IPAD 2 COVER

This cover is minimal, wrapping the edges with a soft rubber cushion that'll protect the light unit from small drops. The back is clear plastic. With a clear screen film cover the tablet would be fully protected. If that's all you want (no stand, transport case) it's about as slim as you can get. [griffintechnology.com] *DV* [Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: B+ | Price: $49]

AIR STRAP IPAD 2 COVER

This handy cover will protect the sides and back of the unit. The functional stap creates a mitt/glove fit that firmly grips the tablet in one hand, allowing for writing, data input, etc. Excellent for use in surveying a crowd or a live classroom-like presentation. The increased height of the edge wrap makes for good protection for the front. [griffintechnology.com] *DV*
[Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A+ | Price: $49]

NUGUARD

This soft silicone edge and rear guard is nice and tender like a rubber band with a grip groove on the back. It is super easy to install and remove, plus its overlap fit doesn't cause peel problems for any scratch-resistant screen protector film that might be on the iPad tablet's face. [newertech.com] *DV* [Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A | Price: $19]

NUVUE ANTI-GLARE

If you've ever applied a think plastic sheet to the front of your smart phone, you know it's not easy to apply. This one comes with the tools you need, though: a lint-free wipe and plastic card with felt on the side for pressing out the bubbles. A pair of scissors will solve the edge problems that'll erupt when applying any wrap-around case to the iPad (which could've been solved with better planning and sizing). [newertech.com] *DV* [Setup Ease: B+ | Performance: C | Price: $24]

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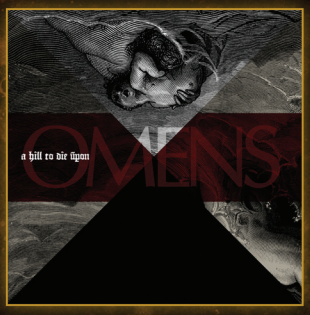

- A HILL TO DIE UPON -
Omens
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STREETFIGHTER
Long lost 1986 release now available! "Fans of Marshal Tucker, 38 Special and the like shouldn't wait to grab this album. Streetfighter is infectious..." (White Throne Review)

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(Retroarchives Edition)
"Broken Silence is one of the greatest melodic metal bands that you have never heard. Every song has a killer hook, jaw dropping guitar solo, and phenomenal vocals." (NoLifeTilMetal.com). For fans of Stryper, Holy Soldier, Queensryche, and Sacred Warrior!

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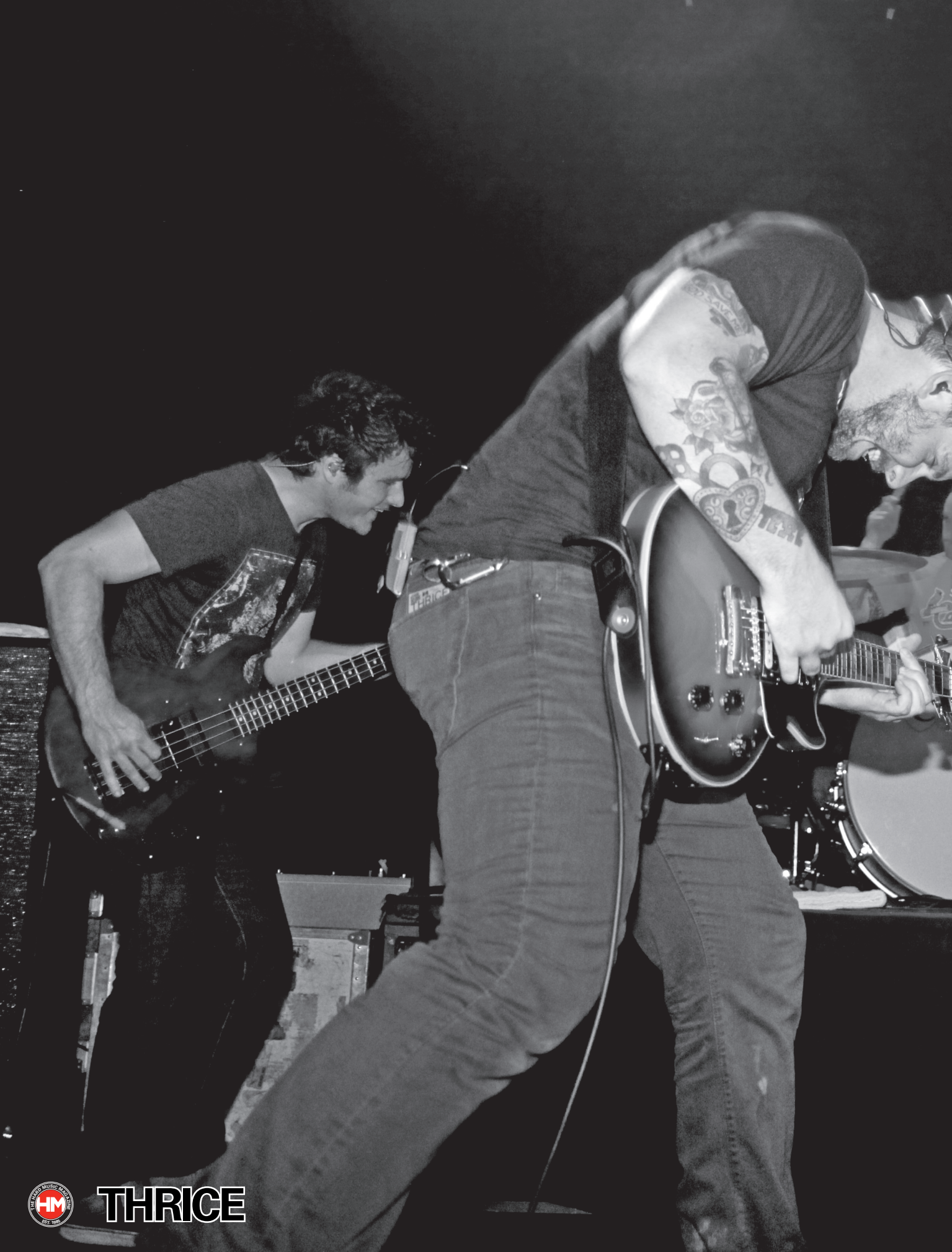
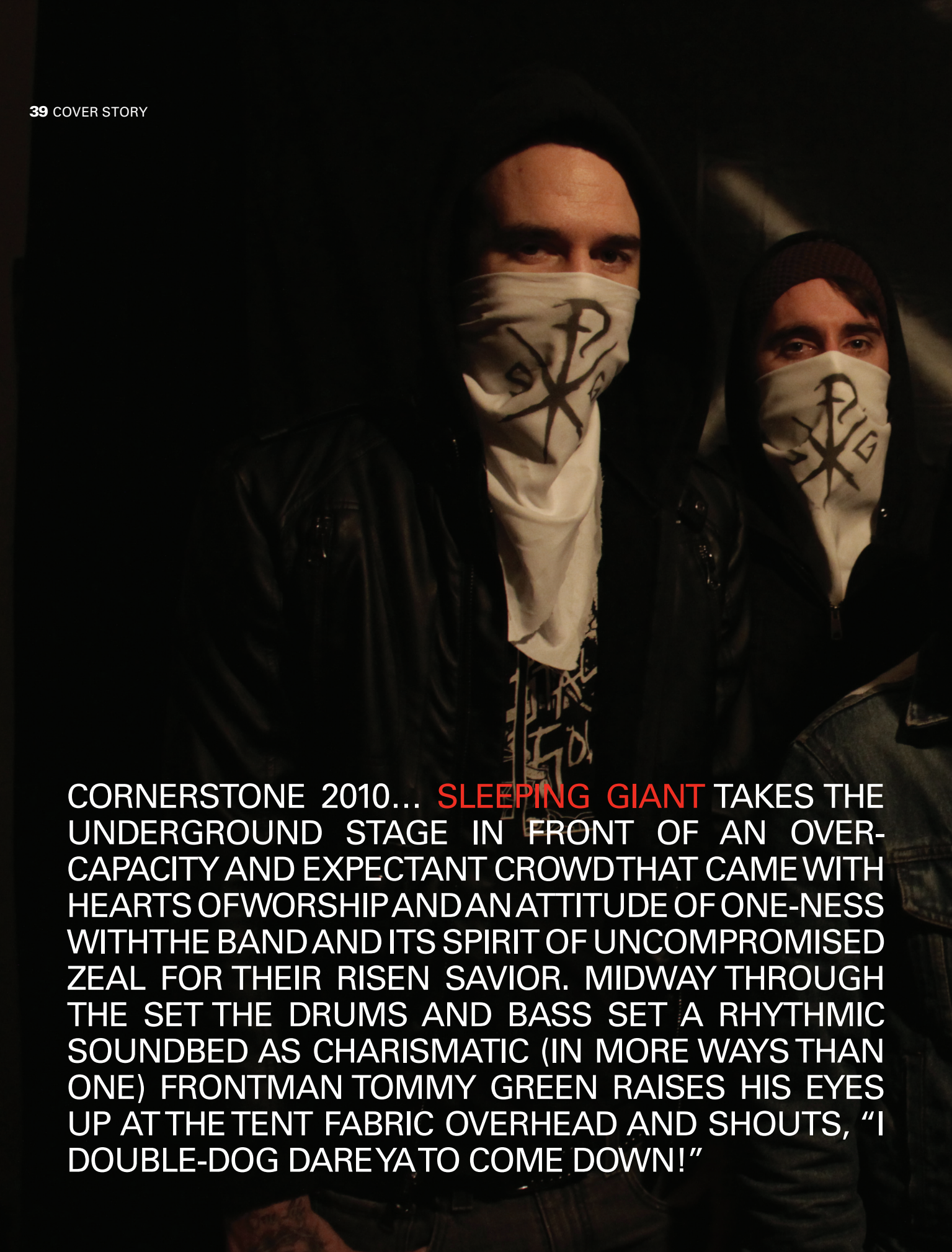
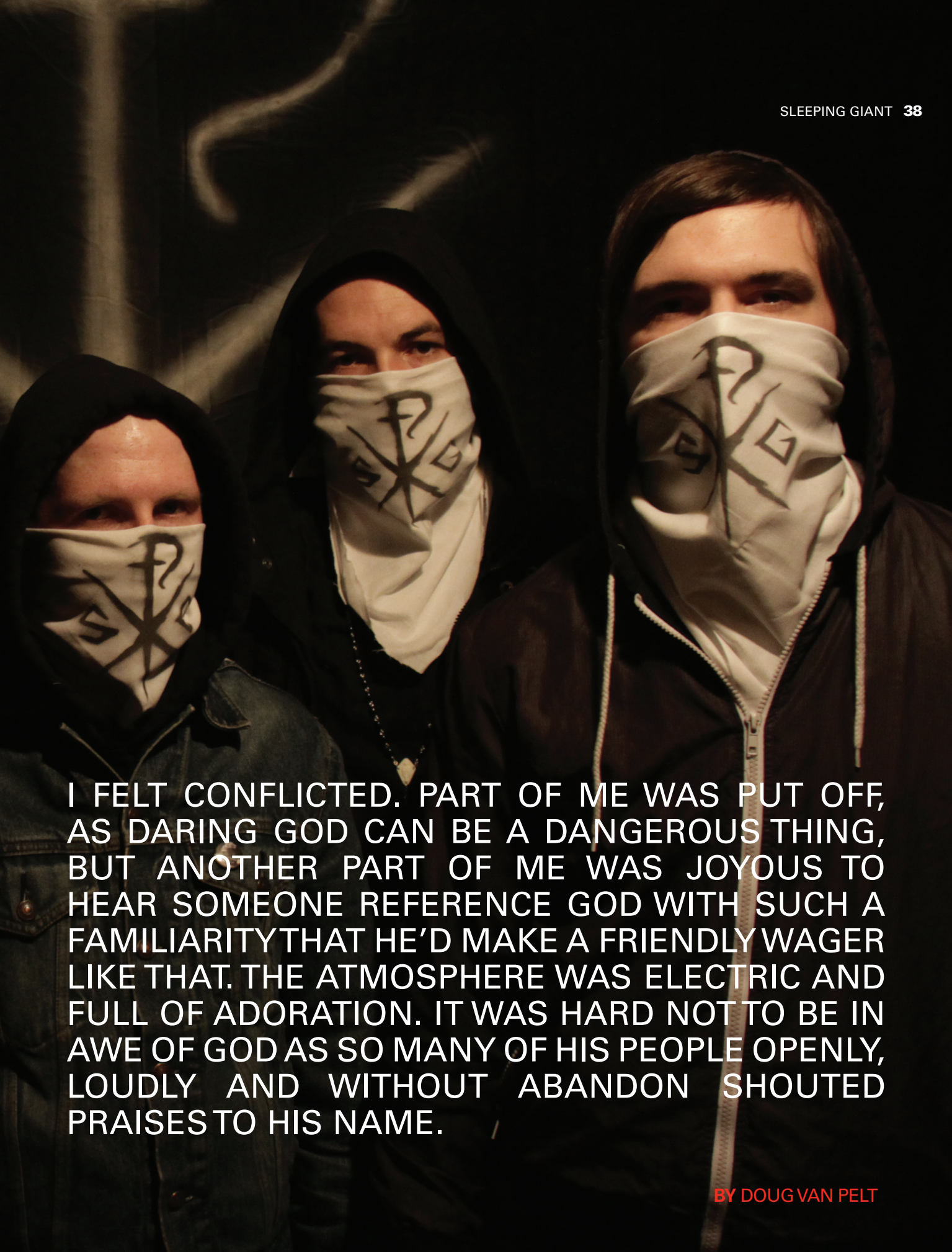


THRICE

Photo: Pam Piffard



CORNERSTONE 2010… SLEEPING GIANT TAKES THE UNDERGROUND STAGE IN FRONT OF AN OVER-CAPACITY AND EXPECTANT CROWD THAT CAME WITH HEARTS OF WORSHIP AND AN ATTITUDE OF ONE-NESS WITH THE BAND AND ITS SPIRIT OF UNCOMPROMISED ZEAL FOR THEIR RISEN SAVIOR. MIDWAY THROUGH THE SET THE DRUMS AND BASS SET A RHYTHMIC SOUNDBED AS CHARISMATIC (IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE) FRONTMAN TOMMY GREEN RAISES HIS EYES UP AT THE TENT FABRIC OVERHEAD AND SHOUTS, "I DOUBLE-DOG DARE YA TO COME DOWN!"



I FELT CONFLICTED. PART OF ME WAS PUT OFF, AS DARING GOD CAN BE A DANGEROUS THING, BUT ANOTHER PART OF ME WAS JOYOUS TO HEAR SOMEONE REFERENCE GOD WITH SUCH A FAMILIARITY THAT HE'D MAKE A FRIENDLY WAGER LIKE THAT. THE ATMOSPHERE WAS ELECTRIC AND FULL OF ADORATION. IT WAS HARD NOT TO BE IN AWE OF GOD AS SO MANY OF HIS PEOPLE OPENLY, LOUDLY AND WITHOUT ABANDON SHOUTED PRAISES TO HIS NAME.

BY DOUG VAN PELT

This is good stuff. It's even old news now that a Sleeping Giant show is almost always like this. It's refreshing to know that the band continues backing its zeal with music that kills and *Kingdom Days In An Evil Age* does just that, with an "indigenous worship" bent that's definitely at full volume. Frontman Tommy Green and bassist Ryan Bermuda weigh in on the double-dog dare, the presence of God (and miracles) at their shows and more…

Correct me if I'm wrong, but last year at Cornerstone I heard you "double-dog dare" the Holy Spirit to come down right now in the Underground Stage tent. Looking back on that now, what do you think about that moment?
Ryan Bermuda: I think that moment was awesome. Guess what? He came.

Tommy Green: Back it. I need the presence and person of the Holy Spirit and I know when there is hesitancy or unbelief and so I like to make His personhood known – especially when there will be opposition. Ask the kids there what they experienced after the opposition started and was broken through? They'll tell you if He showed up or not.

That statement? Any other related thoughts?
RB: That statement was funny, but in reality, it's serious. Tommy did not say this to taunt the Holy Spirit, or suggest that He would not come, but rather to insinuate how desperate we are for the Holy Spirit. We need Him. There is no point to stay together as a band and travel if the Holy Spirit does not come with us.

TG: Back it. Ummm. I'm wondering what do you think of that?

What is God telling you lately?
RB: God is telling me a lot of things. Since our trip to South America, God has really been speaking to me about authority. In South America, people were healed and saved on the street if we sneezed in their direction. I asked Jesus why it was so easy in those countries and so difficult in the US. He answered, "Why don't you tell me? I only have one Spirit." I realized that I don't have to put up with sickness, brokenness, oppression. I carry the Spirit of God. And where the Spirit of God is, the power of Hell cannot be.

TG: Make disciples, not believers; be quiet before the Lord and hang with Him; share the good news of the kingdom; be a good husband and Father.

What burdens are heavy on your heart these days?
RB: Nation healing. To set the captives free, to bring justice to the oppressed. To completely transform nations with the supernatural power of Jesus, so that – through love, freedom and joy – an entire nation reflects what God is like. Free of war, free of slavery, free of oppression, free of religious bondage, free to be who they were individually made to be. That is the call on my life.

TG: True discipleship. My family, trusting God as my sole provider, making sure my marriage is hot, replicating Jesus' character in my life and the ones I lead, greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's presence, virtue, characteristics and power being a good dad.

A related question: what are the themes for this new album, *Kingdom Days in an Evil Age*?
RB: The theme for this album is about us. We are an underground movement, terrorists of sort. We are out to destroy the works of the devil. We are organized in unity and love. We are connected to the heart of God. We are in constant communication with the King, we hear His words and we go. We will heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, cast out demons and establish the rule and reign of God on the earth.

TG: Have a secret life with Jesus. Just because we are Christians doesn't mean we are naive. Attempting to worship God on His terms, not ours. Giving the body of Christ a sound and language that may be new that will impact the bride long-term.

How did the songwriting for the new album go down?
RB: Songwriting for this album was more difficult than usual. Tommy, our singer, lives in Salt Lake City, our drummer Matthew lives in Texas and the rest of us live in Southern California. It was interesting. Lots of emailing songs and riffs back and forth. Eric Gregson and Geoff Brouillette just hammered out these songs. Eric wrote some of the lyrics on the album as well.

What are some practical ways that a believer can learn how to hear God?
RB: It's easy to hear from God. The hard part is to believe that what you heard was actually God. It takes faith and it takes practice. Ask God something and dare to believe what you hear is Him (It's usually the first thing you hear).

TG: First, stop doubting that He isn't already speaking. Spend time in silent devotion with Jesus and His Word. Shut up. Sit still, ask Him to talk. Believe He can. Trust your experience and bring them before the Lord and His people for check up. And keep practicing.

What are some real steps a believer can take to break the yoke of bondage in their life (like a habitual sin)?
RB: The only way to receive real transformation and to clear your life of habitual sin is to spend time alone with Jesus in the Spirit. When we get in His presence, we are transformed. Anything else is just a way to manage your sin and that is just not enough. It always leads to failure. Go into your room, lock the door, pour out your love on God and watch your life change.

TG: Get healing. Power Holy Spirit counsel and presence healing. Repentance. Forgiveness. Accountability within the body of Christ and more of the Holy Spirit fruit of self control pursued with wholehearted dilligence until breakthrough comes.

What vision do you have for this generation of believers?
RB: This generation is the most radical generation yet. My prayer is that we finally take back what the church has given up for years – the power of the Holy Spirit. We must depend on the power of Jesus to change ourselves and change the world through us. Everything else is just talk.

TG: Real discipleship that screws up the Christian culture standing in the way. For real discipleship on every level.

How does the hard music scene please God these days?
RB: It isn't hard for us to please God. He is pleased with us anyways. He gets enjoyment when we do what we love. He loves our interests. He sees every effort to please Him.

TG: It acknowledges and adores Him. It creates. It exists for His glory. It allows and makes room for the Holy Spirit. It honors the Word of God in theory and practice. It advances the kingdom of the Son of His love and it leads people into a salvation relationship with Jesus.

Why do you believe in miracles?
RB: Because I believe in Jesus and the Bible says Jesus is the exact representation of God on the earth. He lived a life of miracles and told us to do the same. Jesus is perfect theology.

TG: Jesus. I've seen miracles on all kinds of levels – natural and supernatural kinds. The Bible says I should.

What are some stories of real-live miracles you've seen?
RB: Which day? Miracles are every-day life for us. Not bragging, because it should be the case for every believer. One story: in Colombia, Tommy prayed for a 10-year-old boy in a mall. He was on crutches, he said that he hurt his knee while running. Tommy prayed and he was completely healed. While Tommy was praying, his grandma, who was standing nearby, was overcome by the presence of God and goes completely out and hits the floor. Security

"There is no point to stay together as a band and travel if the Holy Spirit does not come with us."

ran over thinking Tommy just attacked this poor old abuela and she came to a few moments later and explained to them not to worry, it was just the Glory of God. She was fine and her grandson walked away without crutches or even a limp.

TG: Salvation and faith in Jeaus Christ as resurrected Lord in non-believers, suicides stopped by the presence of love, marriages restored, deaf ears opened, blind eyes see, demonic affliction healed, the low and needy ministered to... Jesus stuff, ya know? This is all at shows, too, by the way. Ask for testimonies from your readers and let's see the fruit. If anyone is actually really being impacted, it will stand.

I'm probably more guilty of this than any other Christian magazine editors, but what do you think about "coarse jesting" or guys joking amongst their friends about sexual innuendo or laughing at dirty jokes or picking on each other with sarcastic questions about their sexual preference and such?
RB: I am guilty of this as well. I don't believe God is easily offended, however. The Bible explains that we can hurt his heart. I hate the feeling of saying something stupid and knowing God is just smacking His forehead at me. I want to walk a life in the Spirit. I don't want to have to disconnect from the heart of Jesus just so I can tell a dirty joke and be funny. I need to learn to value the heart and presence of God more than that.

TG: That behavior reinforces and puts shame on people. I don't like it. I want it to change in and around me as well.

How does a Spirit-filled believer cross over from (an) obedient, Spirit-led lifestyle into legalism?
RB: I'm not sure actually, I've only done it the other way around.

TG: Well, first it depends on your definition of Spirit-filled, really; but what I've seen and experienced take place is that you love the Bible and biblical principle more than the Person of Jesus. You live for the benefit of being Christian instead of just being with and for Him personally – meaning as a person. You completely miss Him, but you want to be right.

On a related note, how does a believer avoid doing that?
RB: Stay connected to the heart of Jesus. It's when little disconnects happen over and over, until they become big disconnects. Give Jesus your attention and your love. Don't ever become too mature for romance with God. God will give you grace for yourself and for other people. Realize that sin is just a by-product of people trying to get their needs met using unhealthy tools.

TG: Develop an experiential encounter-based grid for relationship with the Holy Spirit; commune with Jesus in His Word daily; stay away from proud, arrogant religious people and repent often and quickly.

How do you pray during a song and/or talk to God while at the same time making sure you are in sync with the groove and rhythm of the song you're playing?
RB: It's easy. We've been practicing for a long time. Though, to be honest, if I want to focus more on God, I'll just stop playing. I don't care! Of course, I'm just bass, so nobody notices anyway.

TG: (It) doesn't matter. The grace of God.

What does it mean that God is our "Father?" Why is that significant to a believer?
RB: It's from our father (earthly and heavenly) that we get protection, provision and identity. Without the role of God as our father, these will suffer in our own life and effect how we interact with others.

TG: Great question. To most of us with fathers either blowing it or abandoning the call, it means that God is unknown to a degree. But it also can give us faith that the broken desires to have the best or highest in a fatherly figure probably originated in the heart of God, which can help us pursue something better for our children.

Why did Sleeping Giant leave Facedown Records?
RB: We simply fulfilled our contract with Facedown. We are still buddies.

TG: They didn't want us to stay (laughs)!

Jason Dunn (Facedown Records): We had a 2-album deal with Sleeping Giant, so they fulfilled their agreement and went to another label. That's all there is to say, really.

What are you hoping to see happen with ANGR?
RB: Become millionaires and tour with Metallica. I'm joking, of course. What I meant was tour with Slayer. Those dudes need to know that the whole Satan thing is lame.

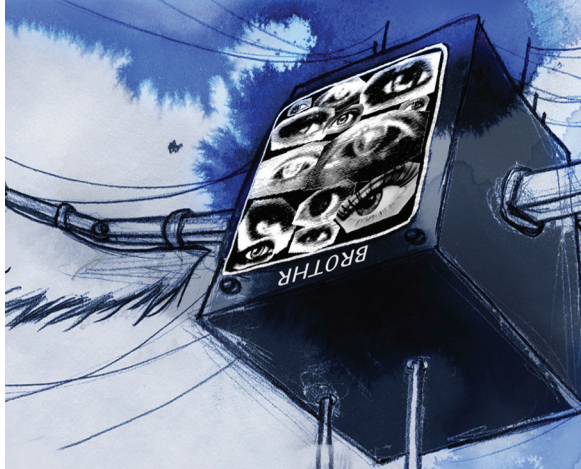
TG: A new opportunity to fulfill the dream and goal of our ministry and sound.

How important is the visual to your art? (album covers, merch/shirt designs) Why?
RB: For this album, it has been more important that usual, because we really relate with the revolutionary mindset. All through history, revolutionary ideas and people have used art, graffiti and other media to portray their message. We are attempting to do the same.

The Story of Our Lives by
THE VIOLET BURNING

★★★★½

- Doug Van Pelt,
editor HM MAGAZINE



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What are some of the challenges of making your hardcore or metal band a ministry?
RB: It hasn't really been that much of a challenge. We didn't have to change our band into a ministry, because our lives are ministry. The band doing the same thing is just a by-product of our lives. Of course, living a life of ministry presents challenges as well. People will think you're a crazy fanatical lunatic for healing and delivering people on the street. That's okay with us.

TG: Not copping out when the music stops on stage.

How do you facilitate the members of your band as teammates rather than just solo performers?
RB: Musically, the songs are written to be complete with each instrument – even down to guitar tone for us. Everything is a part of a whole, it's when we all come together. Does that make sense?

TG: Good question. That is trickiest on the ministry side, because everyone has different strengths and goals in ministry, so we just try to make space for everyone to do what they feel called to do in freedom to Jesus in reaching people.

What do you hope a promoter (especially a believer who shares your vision) does before bringing you guys out for a show?
RB: The only thing we need is someone who believes in us enough to let us take time to do what we do. That and give us directions to the nearest Chipotle.

TG: Pray daily. Promote. Help us reach more people.

What sort of conflict have you ever had with another band? How did that play out?
RB: We haven't really had anything serious. Little stuff happens. That's just the nature of being around other bands. For some, we just honor and bless and try not to offend; for others we can talk it out and come out better friends in the end. We really don't play the ego game. We hate the whole "band dude" mentality, so if you want to flex your ego, we will be in the back eating burritos, looking for Bigfoot and caring about things that matter.

TG: We argued in private. Asked for forgiveness and made peace. Prayed and remained friends.

Your thoughts on the whole May 21 Judgment Day thing (the marketing on billboards, the prophecy that Christ would return on that day)?
RB: I didn't think about it. I thought about what I think about every day – 'Will I allow God to use me to establish His kingdom today?' The reality is, He could potentially come back any day. It's what we do with our life in the meantime that we should worry about.

TG: Bummed me out and broke my heart, because it really made the Word of God look trivial to the people who don't normally read it and damaged the authenticity of Scripture, subsequently making Jesus look trivial. I didn't scoff, because the day will come, but it broke my heart. Just listening to everyone talk about it sucked.

What do you think your parenting will be like if God ever blesses you with children?
RB: Coming from a broken home with a troubled childhood, I know what *not* to do. It was allowing God to heal those places in my life that will allow me to be a good father. I had to own my issues and my problems, so that I would not let history repeat itself. It was up to me if the cycle of brokenness continues or not.

If you could talk to Satan himself, what would you want to tell him?
RB: Who? Oh, that guy? I forgot he existed, because I was too busy being an heir and son of the victorious King and bringing heaven to earth.

TG: Nothing.

Anything else you'd like to add?
RB: Yeah, if you see Bigfoot, tell him I'm coming for him.

✖

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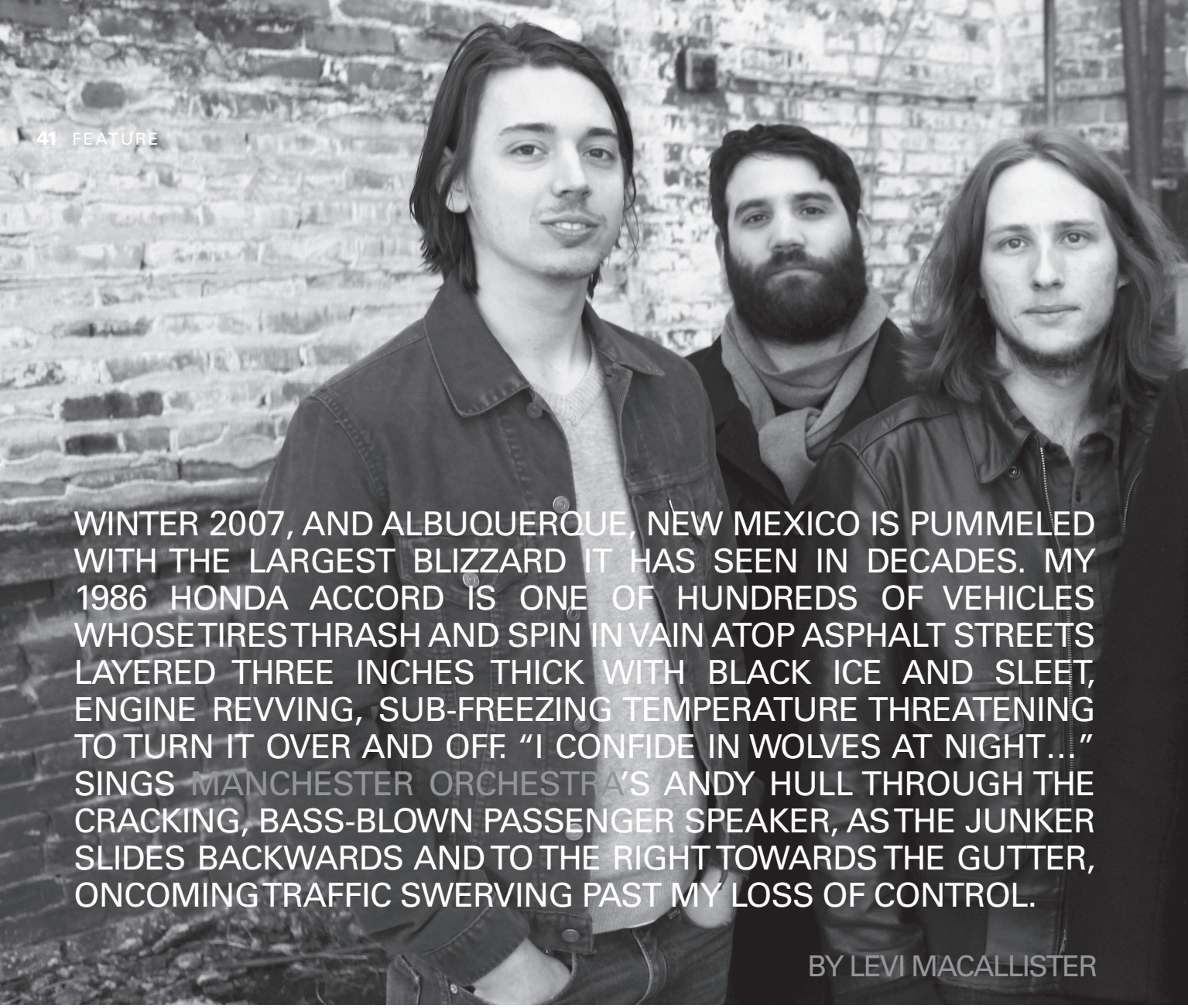

WINTER 2007, AND ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO IS PUMMELED WITH THE LARGEST BLIZZARD IT HAS SEEN IN DECADES. MY 1986 HONDA ACCORD IS ONE OF HUNDREDS OF VEHICLES WHOSE TIRES THRASH AND SPIN IN VAIN ATOP ASPHALT STREETS LAYERED THREE INCHES THICK WITH BLACK ICE AND SLEET, ENGINE REVVING, SUB-FREEZING TEMPERATURE THREATENING TO TURN IT OVER AND OFF. "I CONFIDE IN WOLVES AT NIGHT…" SINGS MANCHESTER ORCHESTRA'S ANDY HULL THROUGH THE CRACKING, BASS-BLOWN PASSENGER SPEAKER, AS THE JUNKER SLIDES BACKWARDS AND TO THE RIGHT TOWARDS THE GUTTER, ONCOMING TRAFFIC SWERVING PAST MY LOSS OF CONTROL.

BY LEVI MACALLISTER

Senior year, and Manchester Orchestra's year-prior debut *I'm Like A Virgin Losing A Child* carries with it: independence and the storm that put all of Bernallio County's school district a week on hold. "Golden Ticket" is night drives with new friends past Christmas decorations, "Ho-ho-ho"-ing Santas spurning on steel-skeletal reindeer and neighborhoods glimmering green, red, blue, yellow. "Where Have You Been" is a chorus sung loud into a blanket of white falling through the sunroof from a city-lit night sky, glowing the way freedom feels to a group of near-graduates out of their parents' homes. "I Can Feel Your Pain" left us stunned at Hull's magnificent lyricism and leaves me bewildered at its accursed prophetic-speak of the death of my own father. The track list is the memories of an adolescence fading, the music a testament to the beginning of lifelong friendships, the lyrics forever remembered in our minds the way "don't stop calling, you're the reason I love losing sleep" was scribed in dry-erase marker atop the bathroom mirror of a friend, a girlfriend, a fiancé, a wife.

In a fleeting season, Manchester Orchestra became a soundtrack to timelessness.

Five years and two records later, Atlanta, Georgia's Manchester Orchestra puts a time to sound with *Simple Math*. "Andy is always writing. Without a doubt, he is one of the most prolific songwriters I know," says bassist Jonathan Corley in a brief phone interview during their tour with Cage The Elephant, "and I absolutely respect him for it." A lyrically-conceptual tour de force, *Simple Math* is Hull's most autobiographical release to date. Self-depreciating honesty, questioning and confusion breathe through the story of Hull's relationship with his wife that threatened irreconcilable division in a marriage that barely got started.

"I think that this record rings really close to home," says Corley in a definitive voice – surely a man who bore a weighty portion with the band alongside Hull – reminiscing the events that inspired the album's content, perhaps still able to feel the emotional tinge of lyrics shouting, "I'm tired of lying: I wish I loved you like I used to." Then, thankful for ultimate resolve, he adds, "and there's a lot of things that ring really true for all of us, you know?"

Perhaps the sporadic nature of the *Simple Math*'s composition is indication of the poignant ebb and flow that made it what it is. Beyond lyrical conceptualization, Manchester explored a new avenue, sonically and even the instrumentation becomes personified within the story. *Simple Math* rises and falls and the tide creeps and recedes. A horn section here and there, and a string section virtually everywhere became tools for creating a resonance that Manchester hadn't explored before and a quietness that left them free to keep gentle yet full – and layer. "We sat down with twenty-seven to thirty songs that Andy brought in and we were working through all of those and after time it came down to the ten songs that actually make up *Simple Math*… It's very different than anything we've done in the past and it opens us up to do a whole lot more in the future, because we touch on a sonic headspace and are into an area that we've never approached before." Among the progressions that worked their way into the album was the involvement of the Brooklyn Youth Choir in the quasi-Pink-Floyd infused "Virgin," which performed alongside Manchester Orchestra upon their return to David Letterman's *The Tonight Show*. "We were always recording the rehearsals that we had and then continuing as the song changed to go back and

listen to it to see what worked and what didn't. As we got further along in the recording process, our producer's kid, along with other people that are involved in this youth choir, came on the record."

Naturally, with progression comes critique. Manchester seemed to sacrifice the hook, line and sinker that their previous releases were for a fullness that, granted, has caught them flak and praise; labeled them boring and genius. Social net-workers and @ManchesterOrch followers' phones explode with retweets of fan criticisms and press backlash as the singer/songwriter has admitted to hanging on each negative conclusion as personal attack. "I probably don't read as much press as other people in the band," Corley continues, "but we're all incredibly happy with what we made on this record. At the end of the day that's all you can really do – is make something different than anything you've done before. We've gotten a great response from fans – from people that have heard this record and even people that have never heard anything by us before are coming out to shows after hearing *Simple Math*. That's encouraging. Within press there are absolutely reviews that are well written that I appreciate on either side of what their opinion is on our records. I hope that we continue to surprise people, to make something new, to evolve, to change the sound and context of a record that we release."

Evolution is a must, but there is an element that will never change: Manchester Orchestra is the young theologian-conversationalist's dream. Hull, "the only son of a pastor I know who does the things I do," challenges himself rather frighteningly on the title-track with a chorus questioning, "What if I was wrong and no one cared to mention it? What if it was true, that all we thought was right was wrong?" In one song, a "hallelujah to one that we love" with reverence. In another, a curse of God's name and a sarcastic embitterment at his sovereign hand. Corley recognizes the clash – with family, with friends, with listeners: "It's safe to say that [our theological undertones cause conflict and closeness]. We absolutely all grew up, all five of us, with Christianity being a large part of who we are. You mentioned the spiritual undertones of the songs. If that's something that you grew up with, it'll come out through lyrics." Whatever their stance, the back and forth is enough to disrupt a comfortable nonchalance with such relatable questions that arise out of Hull's ambiguity, or – perhaps better interpreted: vibrant and unabashed frustration.

June 2011, and a young fan who's building memories to "Leaky Brakes" – closing the record with an apologetic pleading and guitar work as combustible as Andy's drunken state layered atop it's structural simplicity – asks his wife if she remembers the "hallelujah" sung into a smoke-stained bar four years ago in Albuquerque, after the storm had passed.

Good artists can create a novel thought, but great artists make them stick and the best make soundtracks to specifics that might not otherwise be remembered. Perhaps that is the key to *Simple Math*'s opener:

"Dear everybody that has paid to see my band, it's still confusing: I'll never understand."

✖

Photo: Ryan Russell

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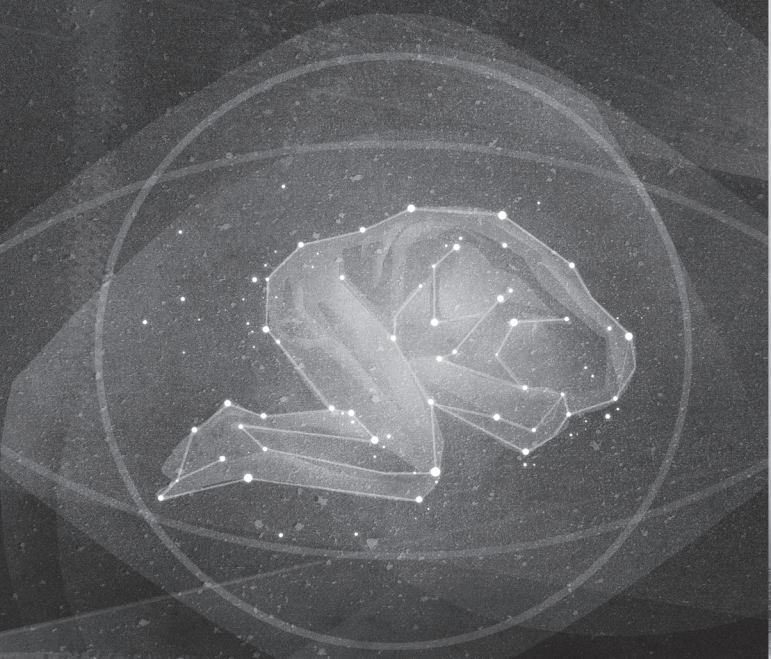

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What **Straight Line Stitch** Says

SOMETIMES ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER. WHEN WE INTERVIEWED ALEXIS BROWN OF STRAIGHT LINE STITCH FOR THE LAST ISSUE'S LAUNCH OF THE "INK ON INK" SECTION, WE KNEW THAT A FULLER, FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW WAS IN ORDER WITH THIS SOFT-SPOKEN HEAVY METAL FRONTWOMAN. WHILE WE HAD TO COAX GETTING SOME PERSONAL ANECDOTES ABOUT HER BANDMATES, SHE WAS MORE THAN WILLING TO TALK MUSIC, FAITH, TOURING AND (YES) TATTOOS. READ ON AND I THINK YOU, TOO, WILL FEEL LIKE YOU'VE MADE A NEW FRIEND AND/OR A NEW BAND TO LIKE.

SLS L-R: Jason White, Seth Thacker, Alexis Brown, Kanky Lora, Kris Norris

What is your favorite song or songs in Straight Line Stitch? Tell me what it is about each that draws you to it?

Right now my favorites… Well, when we recorded it, definitely my favorite song on the album, hands down... On the *Fight of our Life album*, my favorite song is "Laughing in the Rearview." It's my favorite song, because for me it embodies everything about the band – as far as, like, the heaviness of it, the aggressiveness of it and just the melody (and) the toughness of it. It embodies everything that I love about our band. It's just a good tune to rock out to. I even enjoy playing it live. I like listening to it and I love playing it. Sometimes you get like you play the same songs every night all the time and you get tired a little bit. I never get tired of playing it. The song's basically about pretty much looking back on hardships, things you had trouble with in the past and, you know, looking back and saying, "I surmounted that. I'm still laughing at it. That wasn't so bad. It's funny now, because I can look back on that hardship and laugh at it." That's basically what the song's about.

Speaking of, if you had to choose between the killer riff and the chorus that everyone loved to sing along, but you had to choose one, which would you choose and why?

Hmmm. I would choose the chorus. You know why I would choose the chorus? It's because there's nothing like playing a show and having people sing your lyrics. There's no feeling… I can't even describe it. When we're playing live and they basically drown me out – they're louder than me and I'm like… To me, that's hands down over a killer riff. Anyday.

I'm sure it might change from song to song, but for a "typical" song, where do you take your vocal cues from? Which instruments or sounds are you focusing in on to keep your timing perfect?

Definitely a little bit of everything. Definitely guitars and drums. That takes my time and measurements – where to stop, where to scream, where to sing. Always through a song for however long it takes me until the lyrics start to fill in themselves. It's hard to explain. That's just how I write. The songs tend to write themselves.

If you had to perform in less-than-ideal conditions, which sometimes is every night, what are one or two things that are deal-breakers for you – meaning you wouldn't perform without this or that? What would those things be … and why?

Oh, man! I can't even say monitors, because I've had to learn to adapt to not being able to hear myself, which has been hard. Back in the day I definitely would've said monitors. That would be a deal-breaker, because it's like so annoying when you can't hear yourself. When you can't hear yourself, you tend to push harder and, for me, I'll ruin my voice and everything, but I've learned to adapt. As of now, something that would be so bad that would make me not play a show? That would be if there was no P.A. (laughs) There's been times. We've played a show where they didn't have a P.A. It was like, "What?! How can you not have a P.A.?" That might be it, because we will play. It doesn't matter. We will play. Bad conditions or not, we will find a way to play.

What do you think about Jesus Christ?

Umm, man! I've already got Him tattooed on half of my body! I'm a believer. I don't speak for the band, because we all share different goals. But I'm definitely a believer. I believe God. I don't claim any type of denomination, I just believe in God, a higher power. I believe in the good of people. I believe in Jesus – that He's a good person. I just… I believe. I've been through some pretty rough times in my life and I don't feel like I … I wouldn't have gotten this far if it wasn't for my beliefs and my faith in Him. So, I'm a big fan, for sure (laughs).

Right on. What do you think of His claims to be the "Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by Me?"
I believe they're the same people, you know. I believe they're one and the same, so when I talk to Him I'm talking to God. So, I believe that God transformed Himself and made Himself man – i.e., Jesus – and walked amongst us back in the day. I do believe He's the Way, the Truth and the Life and stuff like that.

Pretty amazing. What are some unique challenges that you face being a believer in a mainstream music world?
Some of the challenges that you run into a lot of people that don't share your belief, which is fine. Everybody believes in different things. I'm totally cool with that. The only one big challenge for me is they always try to… They don't like it when you push it down their throat, but they're always pointing the finger and making fun of that I do believe in God. That's kind of hard. There's people that sort of heckle you because of your faith or your belief. I get that sometimes. That's a challenge. Also a challenge is like different people like things that you don't believe in, people saying stuff like cuss words. We're all different, so it's different challenges in general. We all believe in different things, stuff like that. I just try to keep my eyes on my yard and that's it – keep my own eyes – keep it moving.

How does a believer in your position maintain some semblance of a healthy spiritual life in a touring rock band?
I pray a lot. I try to keep an open line of communication with God. That's the only way. I believe He's hearing me all the time. He'll never fail me, never let me down. So, that keeps me grounded. Sometimes when it gets too crazy I just spend time and walk away and talk to Him and work it out. I always feel better and it helps me to focus and be able to do what I'm doing.

I'm curious if you have any zealous friends that give you a hard time for being in a "secular" band and how you get past that kind of religious judgment?
You know, we feel lucky. We haven't really had it. Like I said, we've had some people heckle me or whatever. Not heckle. I think heckle is the wrong word, but they question, like, "Why? How do you know?" And all this stuff. But we haven't had anything crazy. Anyone who knows the band knows that we all have different beliefs and stuff like that and nobody's really said anything about it.

Anything you'd like to communicate to the typical "Christian rock fan" (if there is such a thing as typical) in regards to believers in your situation?
Anything I'd like to say? I would just say what I'd say to anybody, you know? Be you. You're you. Let nothing stop you from living your dream and something that you want to do. Let no one stop you from doing that. If you have a belief or faith, that's yours. No one can take that from you. It's best to walk alone than to walk with the crowd. The crowd will lead you off a cliff somewhere (laughs). That's pretty much it, I guess.

When I was a kid I was into sports like skateboarding, as well as rock and roll, I always thought it was cool for a girl to show up and be excellent and get respected for her skills – regardless of her gender. All props to you for that…
Thanks!

You're welcome. What are some unique challenges that a girl faces in a metal band? And how are you able to overcome these challenges?
I don't know. I don't think I face different challenges than anybody else in the industry. I'm trying to think. It's hard in general. With the economy the way it is, it's hard being a band. But I wouldn't say I face any female-like – any special female challenges – besides being a woman, period. In nature... That's the only thing. I will say that: being a woman in nature – that's a challenge, I think. Other than that, you're no different than what any other band faces on a day-to-day basis. Traveling in a van or a trailer or a bus or however other bands travel. We're in a van and a trailer. You deal with things like that. You're together all the time. You have to pretty much live your life with four different personalities. But you make the best of it. I love it. I love doing what we do. You take the good with the bad, pretty much.

When you look around the music scene today, what inspires you as really creative and healthy and positive?
What inspires me is when actual band members go out and hang out with their fans. When band members actually show that they care. That inspires me, because this is what we're doing it for anyways. We're doing it to touch people. We wanna make music that touches people and inspires people and it inspires me when bands are out there that actually, you know, are giving back to people that help us live our dream every day. That's inspiring to me. It inspires me to do better – to do that as well.

What about the negative? If you could change a few things about the scene called "hard music," what would it be? Why?
I would change the stereotype with it. A lot of people think, 'Oh! It's rock and roll music. It's sex, drugs and rock and roll.' It really isn't. Well, not for us. It's work. It's about… Sometimes you have long drives. You can't be wasted and stuff like that and expect to get up there and play a show. I'm not saying that I'm perfect. We have a couple drinks sometimes before shows, but it's still a job. You still have to entertain and you have to do your job. The negative side is that people think it's all a game. 'You guys have the life! You guys have days to party all the time. You get to eat, you get to hang out.' And it's so not like that. It's really not. Sometimes you barely even eat or you eat fast food. You barely get to shower. You're sleeping in the van. You're sleeping on the floor. I would like to erase the stereotypical things of, you know, of being a rock star.

I hear ya. What are some things about Clarksville, TN, that the world at large would not know about, but really endears you to the city?
That's my home! Even when you bring it up I get excited. It's a quaint little town. Well, actually, it's getting a lot bigger. There's great people there. It just holds a special place in my heart, because that's where I started to pursue getting in a band and going after the dream of being in a band. So, it just holds a special place in my heart, because I started my first band there. I played a club called The Warehouse when I was 16. We could only play the show and then I would have to stand outside. I've been playing that club and still play. I've been playing since I was 16. I'm a little older now (laughs), but it holds a special place in my heart. I feel like that's my humble beginnings.

Tell me about the obnoxious, funny or bizarre hobbies, characteristics or strengths of your bandmates?
Let me think. We are all pretty darn bizarre. We all have so many different personalities. That's a good … You caught me off guard with that one (laughs). You know what? We love to laugh. That's one of the endearing qualities about my band. We get along. We can be in a van for 15 hours. Sometimes we want to kill each other, but most of the time it's fun and it's laughter and it's my family. I can cry to them. We can talk. I guess… They're very stinky. The van stays stinky (laughs). They're also talented. I'm just blessed to be surrounded by such talented people. There's so much I could say about them. I love my band to death. It's amazing. As a whole, I think it's our sense of humor. It's very wacky, very funny. I'll have to think about that one. That's a good question. I haven't been asked that one before.

Once again, thanks for being our debut artist for our "Ink on Ink" section in the last issue.
Thank you.

What are your plans for your next tattoo?
I still haven't finished up my side. And the reason why is I didn't think it was going to hurt so much. I went a few times and tried to finish it up and I think it was about five minutes of getting a tattoo and I was like, "Nope! I can't do it. Ya gotta stop." So, hopefully, I'll get this finished – it's a Jesus piece on my ribs. It's a zombie – a zombie Jesus. That'll be my next tattoo. I have a lot of plans. I always want to get more tattoos, but I hate the pain. My tolerance is not high anymore. It's ridiculously low. I can't even take pain anymore. When I was 16, I was like, "Yeah, tat me up. I don't care. I don't feel it," because I was so hyped up and now it's like, "Ahh, I feel everything! No! I can't do it." I hope to get my ribs finished. That'll be my next mission as far as tattoos.

Is it true that skin close to the bone is the most painful to get?
Umm, no. Because when he was doing my ribs – the bones hurt, but then he was like doing the hair and the hair was on my stomach, which is fleshy, it was killing me. I mean, it was painful.

"I believe that God transformed Himself and made Himself man – i.e., Jesus – and walked amongst us back in the day. I do believe He's the Way, the Truth and the Life and stuff like that."

I thought it wouldn't be painful, because, 'That's tender. That's my stomach. That's not going to hurt.' But he was saying it was the most fleshy and soft part. He hates doing the stomach. I can understand why, because I kept trying to move my stomach away from the needle, because it was so damn painful! It was so painful. That's not true. The bone hurts, but I think the other fleshy – the stomach – hurts a lot. A lot, a lot.

What's the typical time frame you set aside to get some ink done?
Whenever I'm in town, I try to… Well, not all the time in town, but I always try to go. I try to see … there's a guy here in Knoxville that does portraits. I want to try to get my family. I already have my brother and grandfather and my grandmom. I want to get more portraits. I always go to Danny to get my portraits. I always try to see him when I have down time, because he's so good. He hooks me up.

What are the pros and cons about colors and fading over time and stuff?
Like anything, you have to take care of it. You know what? When I first started getting tattoos, I was like, "I'm never getting color tattoos – ever! I don't want to do it. It's going to fade." I had a friend, Porkchop, who did my sleeve on my left arm. He said, "Let's put some color in there. You've got pretty skin. It'll show up." I was like, "No, it's gonna fade." He was just like, "Not true. If you take care of your tattoo it will not fade." You've got to put sunblock and stuff like that – sun screen – and lotion and stuff. Just take care of it. I got my first color tattoo and it's cool. I really love getting the colors. It's pretty if you take care of it.

Yeah, it looks awesome.
Thank you.

Anything come to mind about your bandmates? Things you want to bring up about 'em?
They're just great guys. It's kind of hard to pick out single personalities. Kanky (Lora), every time he gets on the phone, when he gets to talking in his native tongue (Dominican), he gets loud (imitates him shouting). It's so loud! That's a quality about him that's kind of obnoxious. It's funny. It's cute. It's adoring. Seth (Thacker), our guitar player, he is the brain of the outfit. He's also the one that's flatulent. Kris (Norris), our other guitar player, is the family man. He's got a two-year-old son and a wife. He's always got his phones on and reading. He's a guitar wizard. He's always looking to better himself. Jason (White), our bass player, loves things like Hello Kitty and he can crochet. Yeah! He loves to crochet. He crochets. He sews in my hair. I'm a black girl and I get weaves and things like that and sometimes I'll flip and I'll have him fill it in for me. Kanky does my nails from time to time. That's pretty cool. We're a weird bunch, but I wouldn't trade it for the world. I love my guys. We're good people. We try to stay down-to-earth and we love our fans. We really do.

That's cool. What are some bands or albums that really blow your mind – that you really love?
I love good music. That's not even like … I can't even say one category. I love oldies. I'm a big, like, '50s, '60s... I even like old, old, old music, like Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Holiday. There's some really good albums, like Pulse Ultra – *Headspace*. They're amazing. Phenomenal. I love Glassjaw. Those are some albums that I really love. Devildriver – *Last Kind Words*. Dirty Money. I like *Last Train to Paris*.

Good music is hard to deny – regardless of the genre. Anything else you'd like to add?
I just wanted to make sure that people know that when they come out to shows and they come out and want to meet us, we're always hanging out. Never hesitate to come and say hi. I just want it to be known that this band is here for our fans. Feel free to hit us up anytime. I want people to know that.

✖

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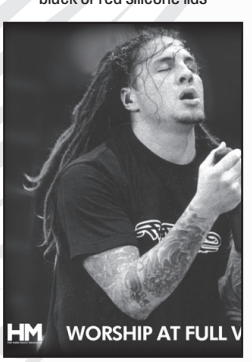

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PICK OF THE LITTER

☆ **Southern**
This is a fantastic and mesmerizing instrumental band made up of Ryan Parrish (Hopesfall, Celebrity), Ryan Burleson (Embraced) and Patrick Copeland (Everett, The Glorious Unseen). The name of this new band is perfect, reflecting their roots and current Nashville residence. The band states that they purposely work to break their tendency to write heavier music and their aim is dead-on with the tracks we heard. Aaron Ford (...Trail of the Dead) lends drums to their new *11 Years* EP, which should be out soon. (Doug Van Pelt)
soundcloud.com/musicofsouthern

☆ **Chicago Is Burning**
The new album from Chicago is Burning, *American Outlaw*, comes out with guns blazing. The first track lets you know they are not going down without a fight. The album has a great blend of screaming, synthesizers, blast beats and just pure metalcore. If Chicago is Burning can be paired with similar artists for a tour, Chicago will not be the only city burning, and there could be a full gang of outlaws. (Tony D. Bryant)
myspace.com/chicagoisburningmusic

A Children's Crusade
Wonderful vocals cascade around over chiming guitars, rising and falling with a killer chill vibe that's atmospheric yet has a strong song sensibility, not too unlike Sleeping At Last mashing with Explosions in the Sky. (DV)
achildrenscrusade.com

The Never Setting Suns
This group sure knows how to have fun. And *Now We're Not Alone* is practically a party album – if your party consists of indie rockers, that is. Mostly acoustic guitar and voices accompany the drums and bass with lots of gang vocals amidst the building crescendos. The irony is not lost in naming one of its songs – with quirky picking trills no less – "Explosions in the Sky." (DV)
theneversettingsuns.com

☆ **Reilly**
Reilly uses every part of their band possible. Violin, drums, guitar and clear 'n' crisp vocals bring the songs alive. Powered by their faith and love, Reilly have no plans of stopping anytime soon. (TB)
reillytheband.com

An Honest Mistake
A pop punk band with catchy lyrics and violins (and know how to use them). By the 3rd song all I could think of was the Ataris and Yellowcard blended together. (TB)
anhonestmistakeband.com

Mason Summers
This outfit from College Park, Maryland infuses urgency and rawness with great vocals and a fast-paced punk rock energy field. (DV)
masonsummers.com

☆ **Bare Branches**
Bare Branches took great care with the handsewn and numbered packaging of its 10-song album, *Haunts*, and the care bleeds over into the diverse, organic and atmospheric musical performance from these six musicians. They know how to both lift and crash the listener. Very tasty. (DV)
barebranchesmusic.blogspot.com

Réaul
Sensible, melodic rock with smooth vocals and infectious singable hooks. The guitar playing and overall instrumentation is good, but never makes the songs or melodies suffer. Ready for the radio. (DV)
reaul.com

☆ **Bodies of Water**
Always impressive, Bodies of Water have recently recorded 12 new songs that pulse with imagination (and lots of woodwinds, horns and percussion). The vocals swirl around like a dreamy Americana landscape. (DV)
bodiesofwater.net

Omar Domkus
The prolific bassist from punk legends Scaterd Few put out a solo album of fretless bass work that's technical yet ambient, chill and melodic. (DV)
omardomkus.com

SweetKiss Momma
With a name like this, you knew this band could boogie, didn't you? Good Southern rock oozes out of this well-produced 12-song *Revival Rock* album. Old, authentic, but ringing with energy. (DV)
skmband.com

Bob K.
Recorded in Stockholm, Bob K's *Fragile* album is full-sounding with organic instruments (like organ, piano) and compelling vocals. If Seabird went all Explosions in the Sky, perhaps it would sound a little like this. (DV)
bobk.se

Photo: Lindsay Paramore

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IRONWILL
UNTURNED

You've got to have either a lot of courage or a lot of arrogance to call the lead-off track of your debut full-length "Visionaries." And yet, *Unturned* might possibly live up to that. Ironwill strike first and strike hard and cause me to miss the days when hardcore was less about breakdowns and girlie haircuts and more about passion, intensity, urgency, ferocity and even (gasp!) musicianship. But this isn't a revivalist band, either. Much like stalwarts Stretch Arm Strong, Strongarm, Falling Cycle, etc., Ironwill combines the best of past, present and future and creates a work of art that will be worth listening to again when the current flavor-of-the-month has faded. Simultaneously melodic, metallic and progressive (instrumental track "Sri Lanka" wouldn't be out of place with labelmates The Blue Letter), with just a few breakdowns (do they need them?), Blood & Ink scores again. ~~[BLOOD & INK] LOYD HARP~~

REFORM THE RESISTANCE
THE TRUTH IS DANGEROUS

Reform the Resistance has released their debut album, *The Truth is Dangerous*, which brings an early-Linkin Park-esque sound to the table. "Kill Lies," starts the album off with a soft-on-the-ears sound (and then) pleasantly annihilates the listener's eardrums with a surprise attack of screaming and rock, rounded off with some rap. *The Truth is Dangerous* is loaded with rock/rap enthusiasm and a few synth effects on the instrumentals. Fans of Linkin Park's *Hybrid Theory* or Hollywood Undead should be running to get this album. ~~[WULI] REGGIE EDWARDS~~

PETER FURLER
ON FIRE

There's very little difference between a Peter Furler solo album and a Newsboys release. Michael Tait now fronts Newsboys, yet Furler is still involved in the writing process. Therefore, *On Fire* is a little bit like old times, back to when Furler was still the voice of Newsboys. This is primarily a collection of praise songs. Some are quite good, like the encouraging "Hold On," while "Psalm 23," which Auto-Tunes Furler's voice, was probably a bad idea. ~~[SPARROW] DAN MACINTOSH~~

SERYN
THIS IS WHERE WE ARE

When the comparisons surrounding are Fleet Foxes, Arcade Fire, Mumford and Sons and the like, it's hard not to notice a new band like Denton, Texas five-piece Seryn. Their alternative folk is based on untraditional instrumentation and imaginative harmonies and time signatures that also recall Freelance Whales. "We Will All Be Changed" is the best, but most of the 10 tracks are quite arresting. ~~[VELVET BLUE MUSIC] MATT CONNER~~

A PAST UNKNOWN
TO THOSE PERISHING

Are you looking for a life vest on the sinking ship of good music in the sea of mediocre hardcore? A Past Unknown is here to save! This band's debut album is a work of art. Wave after wave of brutal breakdowns, solos, guttural screams and insane blast beats fill the air. If you planned on listening to this album sitting down, then be prepared to get up and dance. Lace those shoes tight and do some stretches – you're going to be dancing for the glory of the Lord! Keep an eye out for A Past Unknown for they are sure to be a band that will go places in the future. ~~[RED CORD] MATTHEW LEONARD (TMIH)~~

THE GREAT COMMISSION
HEAVY WORSHIP

The Great Commission is simply that. Great. The opening track "Don't Go To Church, Be The Church" sets the bar high for the album and the genre. The only problem with the bar being set so high, is you have to be able to perform to that level. *Heavy Worship* constantly reaches that bar and keeps pushing higher. Song after song, with breakdowns and melodies similar to A Day to Remember, and the hard-hitting metal of As I Lay Dying... ~~[FACEDOWN] TONY D. BRYANT~~

JAWBONE
LOSS OF INNOCENCE

Blood and Ink's newest band, Jawbone, hits the scene this month with their EP release, *Loss of Innocence*. Fans of No Innocent Victim and Champion will immediately fall in love with Jawbone's epic, old school hardcore sound. The band brings in heavy riffs and old school breakdowns that are sure to perk up the ears of true fans of the scene. For a first EP, this is amazing. Pits at their shows are without a doubt going to be uncontrollable and unreal. If you love circle pits and metallic riffs then do not forget to pick up *Loss of Innocence*. It would be a huge mistake. ~~[BLOOD & INK] NICK COTRUFO (TMIH)~~

FALLSTAR
RECONCILER. REFINER. IGNITER.

It takes a special sound to punch through the wall that is hardcore music. By blending heavy, hardcore breakdowns with blast punk beats, Fallstar has etched itself a niche in hardcore music. Searing vocals, rough breakdowns and a driving hardcore beat combined with positive and thought-provoking lyrics provide a great listening experience. The album's leading track, "Hunters," delivers a stellar example of what you'll hear during the entirety of the album. For anyone wanting a refreshing, hardcore sound, this album's got it. ~~[COME&LIVE!] BRITTANY MCNEAL~~

MANCHESTER ORCHESTRA
SIMPLE MATH

When people like each other, it is because they can relate to each other. Manchester Orchestra does exactly that and covers multiple songs that are deeply rooted in "average" life. This highly orchestrated compilation of songs digs deep into life, religion, and love. Andy Hull brings out his broken side through this album – songs displaying faults and wrong doings in his life. Each track is a different prayer of repenting, admitting and learning. Compared to his last album, *Mean Everything to Nothing*, this one does not portray near as much passion behind his words. The melodies are much more chill, with less tambourine and sing-a-long phrases. This album is worth having and relating to, but is not as powerful and filthy as his previous one. Manchester did not increase vertically in his musical ability, but diversified his music and stretched horizontally in reaching out to more people. ~~[COLUMBIA /FAVORITE GENTLEMEN] ALEXANDRA LEONARDO~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Ironwill *Unturned*	03	03*
Reform the Resistance *The Truth is Dangerous*	04	04
Peter Furler *On Fire*	02*	03
Seryn *This Is Where We Are*	03*	04
A Past Unknown *To Those Perishing*	03*	03*
The Great Commission *Heavy Worship*	04	04*
Jawbone *Loss of Innocence*	03*	04
Fallstar *Reconciler. Refiner. Igniter.*	03*	04*
Manchester Orchestra *Simple Math*	04	03*
Sojourn Music *The Water and the Blood: The Hymns of...*	03*	
The Blind Boys of Alabama *Take the High Road*	04	03
Daniel Amos *Shotgun Angel (Collector's Edition)*	04	05
Upside Down Room *Let's Go For A Ride*	03	03
Sainthood Reps *Monoculture*	03*	04
The Crimson Armada *Conviction*	03*	02*
I Am Empire *Kings*	04	03
Icon For Hire *Scripted*	03*	03*

SOJOURN MUSIC
THE WATER AND THE BLOOD:
THE HYMNS OF ISAAC WATTS, VOL. II

This blues and country rock album settles into a groove and plays with such confidence and strength that the listener immediately knows there must be rich musicianship depth here. This musical entity is the outreach of a church's worship team and the tight oversight of Sojourn Community Church's Pastor of Worship and Arts, Mike Cooper. There's real soul in each slide guitar bent note, each lovely vocal line – whether male or female. Anyone from Buddy Miller to Graham Parsons to The Eagles would surely find something to really love here. As smooth as an icy cold drink on a sweltering hot day, this album has some truly special and "magic" moments, like its title track and "Compel My Heart To Sing." [SOJOURN MUSIC] DOUG VAN PELT

THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA
TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

The Blind Boys of Alabama could have remained a traditional Black Gospel group and done just fine. However, these talented singers have never stopped growing artistically. With *Take the High Road* the men are matched to modern outlaw country singer Jamey Johnson for a fine country-fied effort. This album's best song is "I Was a Burden," a sobering country gem featuring Lee Ann Womack. You also can't go wrong with Willie Nelson helping on "Family Bible." [SAGUARO] DAN MACINTOSH

DANIEL AMOS
SHOTGUN ANGEL (COLLECTOR'S EDITION)

This Daniel Amos reissue is so refreshing! These days, crazy people predict the world's end and make Christians look like idiots, yet Terry Taylor's country-rock prophetic work remains totally sane. There's also the zany fun of "Meal," as well as the vocally amazing worship tune "Praise Song." An extra CD also sports outtakes and alternate tracks, including the brief but silly "Looney Tunes." Perhaps Jesus delayed His return so that more people can experience this musical treasure. [BORN TWICE] DAN MACINTOSH

UPSIDE DOWN ROOM
LET'S GO FOR A RIDE

Punk rock is more attitude than sound. That's why most pop-punk is just oxymoronic. Just because you can play three chords really fast, doesn't make you punk. Upside Down Room, on the other hand, is punk. *Let's Go For a Ride* is packed with simple, snotty, angry rock & roll. The chords and the words are simple, but the attitude is perfectly right. "Wrong Number," is an exception that achieves a spot-on Pixies imitation. [POP VOX] DAN MACINTOSH

SAINTHOOD REPS
MONOCULTURE

It's refreshing to play a new album and then want to hear it over and over. *Monoculture*, the full-length debut for the Sainthood Reps is such a record. Playing a punkish, grungy, indie style of rock, it's apparent the band has been shaped by many influences, yet they flaunt a sound that is distinctly theirs. "Dingus" pumps forth an old West Coast punk flavor with a shot of Dillinger Escape Plan and a blast of Nirvana. Classic, contemporary, and killer. [TOOTH & NAIL] CHARLIE STEFFENS

THE CRIMSON ARMADA
CONVICTION

On The Crimson Armada's second album, they've added singing and other metalcore touches to their previously deathcore sound. The best songs – "Conviction," "Composed of Stone" – feature a driving tempo and few added flourishes. The weaker songs suffer from too many tempo changes and too many ideas crammed into three minutes ("You've Changed"). The screaming and guitars have notably improved and it's clear they're going for more variety; the polish in putting the elements together into cohesive songs just isn't there yet. [ARTERY/RAZOR & TIE] COREY ERB

I AM EMPIRE
KINGS

Boasting some seriously rough riffs and dirty vocals that literally scream for attention, I Am Empire's *Kings* picks up where their debut self-titled album left off. With a sound that is reminiscent of Southern rock, I Am Empire has put together a driving album with tracks that rise and fall, but don't let up. Tracks like "Brain Damage" and "Saints & Sinners" push through a driving beat, but are broken up by the softer "Love & Despair" and "Take Me Away." [TOOTH & NAIL] BRITTANY MCNEAL

GRAVE ROBBER
EXHUMED

If you are into the Spirit-filled punk bands then you know who Grave Robber is. If you have never heard of them, then you are missing out. Grave Robber is a mix of Misfits-style horror punk with Gwar-style theatrics. *Exhumed* is the first release on vocalist Wretched's Rottweiler Records. With classic songs such as "They Hate You", "Fill This Place With Blood", and "Army of the Dead' just to name a few ... along with their 2005 demo remastered with songs like "Reanimator" and "I Zombie." This is a great record for diehard fans and newbies that have a love of horror punk, but want a better message the dead bodies hanging from poles. [ROTTWEILER] ROB SHAMELESS

ICON FOR HIRE
SCRIPTED

Though Icon for Hire has yet to perfect an iconic sound, the overall production and fluidity of their debut album *Scripted* proves to be one of quality and continuity. Their lyrics provide a sense of familiarity touching base in sundry topics such as finding joy in struggle and the fight for said joy. As an entity, the band exhorts musical elements that maintain an edgy pop sound similar to the likes of Paramore and Flyleaf. [TOOTH & NAIL] JOANNA LUGO

THE HOAX
STUMBLING THROUGH

The world may be a "trick" but The Hoax certainly keeps it real in *Stumbling Through*. Clutch bass lines, brutal beats and heavy guitars drive this 15-song album into a slue of intense circle-pits. The Hoax covers genres such as ska, punk and Southern metal. The lyrics are seemingly impeccable and biblically sound, discussing topics such as consumerism and propaganda. Though this band of characters needs some growth, The Hoax has great potential in store. [THUMPER PUNK] JOANNA LUGO

HYLAND
WEIGHTS & MEASURES

If you're looking for a great album to sing along in the car to, Hyland's *Weights & Measures* is just what you're looking for. By integrating catchy, faith-based lyrics with smooth vocals and soaring melodies, Hyland has created a sound that is truly an easy listen. Don't get it wrong, though, this album is not to be missed. Plus, Anberlin's Stephen Christian lent his vocal expertise to "The One That Got Away." It's an addition that only adds to this album's power. [TOOTH & NAIL] BRITTANY MCNEAL

THE WAY
THE FIGHT IS OURS

Right from the beginning of this album The Way made it clear that they were a punk band from Los Angeles. This album covers their love for God, dealing with their struggles and the media. They don't care what you think about it and they are going to let you know. This album is for fans of Bad Religion, Social Distortion and there's even hints of Johnny Cash. [THUMPER PUNK] TONY D. BRYANT

DOMINIC BALLI
AMERICAN DREAM

This dude knows how to chill to the max, relaxing in a nice bass and organ-driven groove, but he also knows how to throw in plenty of world music sounds and crank up the energy with smooth rock. He labels his style "CaliRockReggae" and it fits. The lead-off title-track features Sonny of P.O.D., who adds some nice spice that wasn't necessary. Balli had me at "Favela," his rant on the shanty towns in Brazil. [RED SONG] DOUG VAN PELT

Album: *thegodmachine*
Label: Red Cord/Victory
Release Date: July 19, 2011
Members: Sean McCulloch, vocals; Jason Combs, guitar; Dusty Saunders, guitar; Ryan Estrada, bass; Lee Humerian, drums
RIYL: Avenged Sevenfold, Righteous Vendetta, Day of Vengeance

myspace.com/phinehasrock

PHINEHAS

Although none of its original members are still in the band's current lineup, Phinehas still holds tight to the initial beliefs and goals the band was founded on over a decade ago.

Started by a couple guys at Biola University in La Mirada, California, Phinehas was formed not only because of their love of hardcore music, but also because they saw a need for a ministry to reach out to kids who weren't accepted by the church crowd.

"We all love hard music, and we saw these kids that were just broken," Phinehas drummer, Lee Humerian said. "We just wanted to tell them what we believe, and we feel like we have the answer to all of that: Jesus Christ. We want to reach out to them, but not in the traditional way of, you know, the way of the church; and a lot of the time churches aren't very accepting or (don't) have a very good program for kids like that, for kids that have kind of been cast out. A lot of them have had bad experiences in the church."

Although Phinehas was founded on the premise that its music would help those who felt they didn't belong or weren't accepted by the church, Humerian said the band's goal isn't to shove its message down anyone's throat. Instead, Phinehas intends to mirror Jesus' ministry through its intricate guitar riffs, soaring vocals and positive lyrics.

"We just share the gospel. We believe that Jesus loves everyone for who they are and Jesus hung out with sinners, prostitutes, tax collectors when He was on this earth and we want to do the same. We want to mirror what Jesus' ministry was back then. That's just kind of why we do what we do," Humerian says. "Obviously, we just love music, so we're all musicians and that's what we love to do. That's the best way that we can glorify God in our lives – is doing what we love and also doing that for Him."

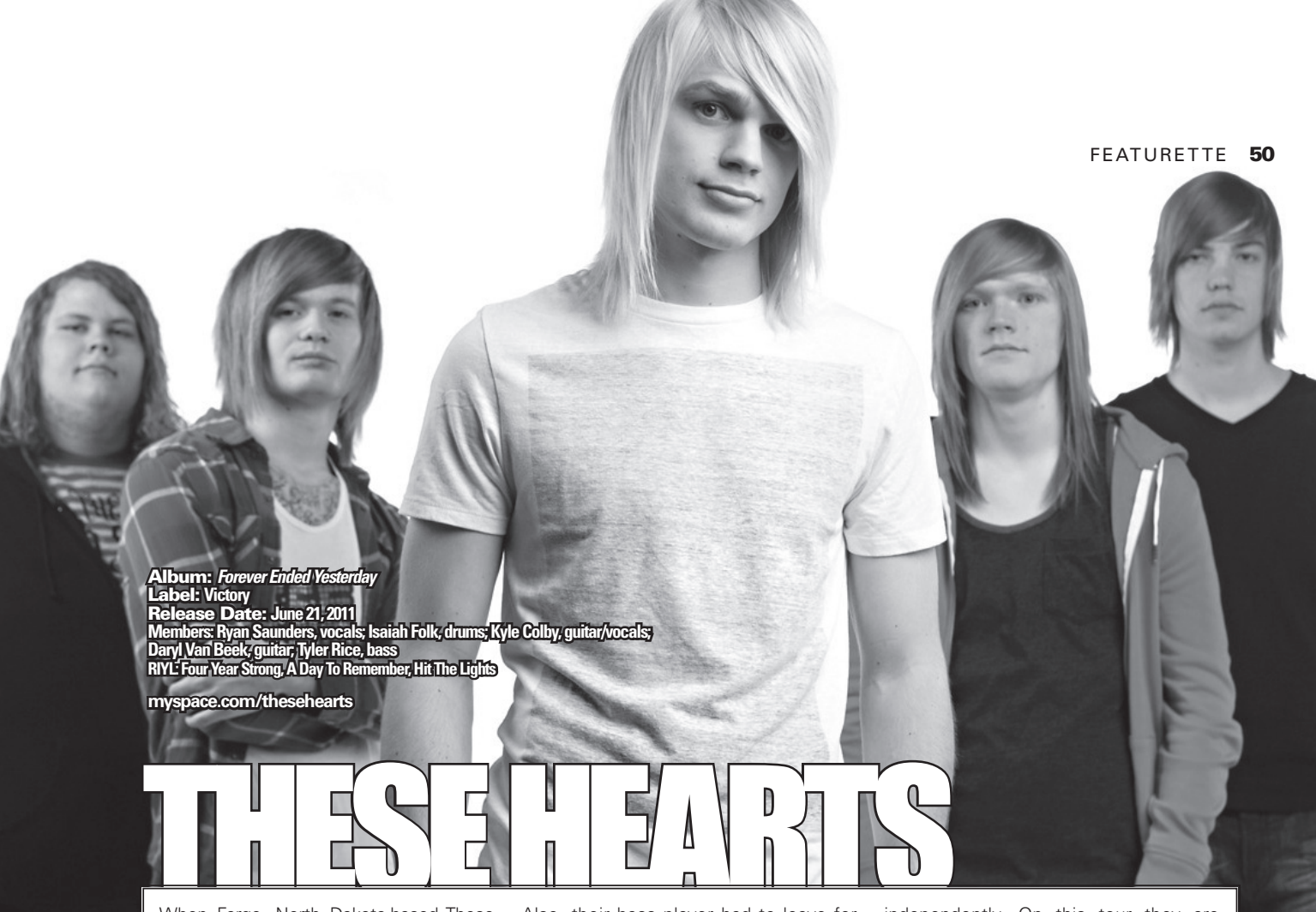
After almost a decade and an entirely different lineup, Phinehas began recording its debut album, *thegodmachine*, in October of 2009. After the loss of the band's final founding member and then the loss of its lead guitarist, who left to fill in for Haste the Day, the album's progress slowed down significantly. It wasn't until December of 2010 that guitars and vocals were finally finished, and in March of 2011, the band signed with Red Cord.

"I mean, we've been recording this for over a year and a half, but it's been done since December of 2010, but we've just been sitting on it and we were actually going to release it (June 7)," Humerian said. "That was the plan, but once Red Cord teamed up with Victory Records, we had to push it back to give them more time to market it. So finally we got the release date set at July 19, so it's been a long time coming for us. We've been sitting on this forever, so we're so ready to get this album out there."

Even though the band has come across setback after setback during the course of its decade-long existence, Humerian says Phinehas is excited for the long-term and the band is set to keep holding tight to the principles it was founded on back in 2001.

"We've been through the wringer – we're just going to go with the flow. We believe that God is going to provide like He has so many times in really hard ways that we know that He's going to provide in any situation."

BY BRITTANY MCNEAL



Album: *Forever Ended Yesterday*
Label: Victory
Release Date: June 21, 2011
Members: Ryan Saunders, vocals; Isaiah Folk, drums; Kyle Colby, guitar/vocals; Daryl Van Beek, guitar; Tyler Rice, bass
RIYL: Four Year Strong, A Day To Remember, Hit The Lights

myspace.com/thesehearts

THESE HEARTS

When Fargo, North Dakota-based These Hearts were first formed under the name These Hearts Turn Quickly, they were a pop/punk band. Nowadays, lead vocalist Ryan Saunders is the lone founding member and the band released their debut record, *Forever Ended Yesterday*, on June 21.

When some of the original members left, the band was looking for a guitarist and drummer, so guitarist Daryl Van Beek and drummer Isaiah Folk joined and the name was shortened to These Hearts.

Next, they took more of a scream/post hardcore direction and started writing songs for their EP. They ended up recording independently in South Dakota and supported the EP for a while.

"We did some demos out in New York about two years later and tried to write a little more structured songs and get some better recordings to shop around to some labels with," Van Beek said. "That got a little attention, but nothing we were interested in, so we just supported the demo songs and that EP for another year."

Along the way they had a guitarist quit, which prompted the recruiting of Kyle Colby who was in a local band in Fargo. He was also a friend of These Hearts, who they knew.

Also, their bass player had to leave for personal issues, so they also added Tyler Rice, who they knew from another local band.

"It was just like members from local bands teaming up and making like a local superband," Van Beek said. "We just started writing a full-length record by ourselves and we ended up (being) produced by Craig Owens and recorded at 37 Studios. That caught the attention of quite a bit of the music industry. We shopped it to labels and got the interest from Victory, which we thought was really cool and promising."

They recently signed a deal and their record came out on June 21. Not only that, but they are also on tour promoting their debut effort.

Van Beek said signing to Victory is big for them, because Victory has bands along their genre style, such as A Day to Remember and Silverstein, by whom they are influenced by – and to be on the same label that built them up and brought them to the top shows there is a lot of hope for them and makes them excited to see what their record can do.

The tour, Van Beek said, was booked before they signed with Victory, independently. On this tour they are playing at some of the major festivals, such as Cornerstone and Ichthus. They're also on their way to LifeFest and Big Ticket festivals on their venture.

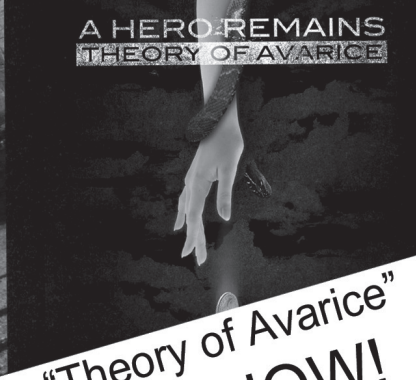
Van Beek said it helps to play big festivals, because often times, people travel hours to attend, so not only are they playing for a crowd from that town, but they are also exposing themselves to an entire region at a time.

"We've made a lot of friends and fans already on this tour, so it's just a great place to promote your band and get a lot of exposure."

Van Beek said a lot of time and work went into recording the record and it is filled with nothing but songs they feel were the best of what they recorded.

"We all personally love this record. We spent over a year writing and recording and getting it produced," Van Beek said. "We went through some songs that we ended up rewriting or else fully taking off the ones we weren't really happy with. It's an album packed with songs we think have a ton of potential and we love playing and we can't wait for our fans to hear it."

BY REGGIE EDWARDS



"Theory of Avarice"
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"Society Lost"
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Album: *Reconciler. Refiner. Igniter.*
Label: Come&Live!
Release Date: March 29, 2011
Members: Chris Ratzlaff, vocals; Justin Haag, guitar; Jason Brown, guitar/vocals; Cody Carrier, drums; Bryan Ratzlaff, bass
RIYL: Sleeping Giant, Between the Buried and Me, Oh Sleeper

facebook.com/fallstar777

FALLSTAR

With so many musical acts in the heavy music scene now-a-days, it's hard for bands to make themselves stand out or give off a "wow" factor. Many bands have tried getting attention by showing off their colorful tattoos or having a competition of who can create the sickest breakdowns. When it comes to Portland, Oregon's Fallstar, the unfiltered truth is spoken without warning.

Their full-length debut album, *Reconciler, Refiner, Igniter*, which can be downloaded for free from the Come&Live website, has an overall message of God wanting his people to be vessels and spread his love through Christ.

"*Reconciler, Refiner, Igniter* is about the process of how we are brought back to a relationship with God growing and molding us," said guitarist Justin Haag. "He ignites us to go out into the world and be the hands and feet of Jesus. That's what we felt called to do and use our talents for. We love it."

Vocalist Chris Ratzlaff believes this album differs from Fallstar's previous EP, *Your Eyes Don't Lie*. During the process of writing lyrics, Ratzlaff stood by a list of topics he wanted to cover, which wasn't done previously. At times, he thought what was really on his mind would be too strong for a "Christian" album. After taking time to pray, adjustments were made with the lyrics to bring a new set of songs showing inspiration.

"Sometimes the Christian culture lacks a cunning message when speaking about what we know to be true," said Ratzlaff. "I think I've said this before, but times when I felt the Spirit on me I would let my pen go free and I feel God was able to contribute lots of the lyrics that way. On the last EP I hadn't really tried that yet."

On a musical note, Fallstar can be described as Metalcore with a twist of Rock-n-Roll and Ambient. Members of the band have musical influences from As Cities Burn and Taking Back Sunday to Between the Buried & Me and Oh Sleeper. With the addition of three new members, the sound has changed from their previous release. Each member for the full-length wrote about three to four songs. Fallstar does keep the heaviness going with circle pit drumming and breakdowns, but they aren't afraid to show off a more ear-relaxing sound.

"We get pretty ambient sometimes," said Ratzlaff. "We really focused on keeping A.D.D. listeners by not getting too spacey. A lot of music was rewritten. Three days before recording I decided I hated four of our choruses. Jason and I sat down all day and rewrote music and vocal melodies. Without that I think the album would be a very different product than it is now."

Fallstar has done shows with both secular and Christian bands. Through their faith in God, Fallstar hasn't let any of the worldly distractions cause them to lose their focus. Everyone in the band keeps accountable for each other and they pray together a lot as a group. This helped tremendously with the transitioning of members and keeping the band's purpose alive.

Even though Fallstar is young and are starting to get noticed, they still have a lot to offer to everyone who has an ear for God's love. With more bands evolving and new trends starting, Fallstar have set their eyes on the target and won't change their course.

"The older I get, the more annoyed I get by trends in music," said Ratzlaff. "I'm way stoked to see more and more bands willing to be the scum of the earth in order to present Jesus to the world. The time for being merely labeled a 'Christian' band is over. We'll start seeing boys and men going after this thing hard and really speaking and acting by the power of the Spirit, so that the truth hangs in the air and everyone is able to see the goodness of God."

[Photo: Tim Riley Photography, trileyphoto.com]

BY DANIEL GARCIA

Album: *Monoculture*
Label: Tooth & Nail
Release Date: August 9, 2011
Members: Francesco Montesanto, guitars/vocals; Derrick Sherman, guitar/vocals; Jani Zubkovs, bass; Bradley Cordaro, drums
RIYL: Brand New, Crime In Stereo, The Xcerts

facebook.com/sainthoodreps

SAINTHOOD REPS

The latest signing to Tooth & Nail required more vision than other bands on the storied label, but a special something was evident in Sainthood Reps – even if the band members themselves hadn't quite worked out their craft. It's a testament to a label learning to trust its instincts and giving the band the freedom to work it out.

The Long Island quartet signed with T&N earlier this year, but even during, guitarist Derrick Sherman said they were still working out their sound. Initially the group wanted to be a post-hardcore band with mostly instrumental elements. By the time their label debut drops in August, those tendencies will be all but lost.

Sherman says he was surprised when Tooth & Nail first came calling, simply because the label doesn't exactly have a lot of instrumental rock.

"We didn't think we'd necessarily align with Tooth & Nail," says Sherman. "Growing up, I had a bunch of their records in my collection, so I definitely had a lot of respect and nostalgia for the label. I just didn't think we fit sonically with a lot of the bands there. But once I got to talking to everyone over there, they were on the same plane that I was. They had the same vision. They knew what we were trying to do and they were excited about it. That's all you can really ask for in a label."

Sherman had previously been touring and playing with various Long Island bands, including as a third guitarist for Brand New in years past, but it was his close relationship with principal songwriter and frontman Francesco Montesanto that drew him out and into Sainthood Reps for good – after some convincing, that is.

"Francesco and I had been playing together for years," explains Sherman. "Whenever I got home from being out on tour with whatever band I was in, we would play together. He'd started writing his own songs after playing drums for years and he'd send them to me. At first I was giving advice and that turned into collaborating with him.

"Then in the fall of 2009, we went into the studio with some songs we'd put together and we finished three or four songs," he continues. "We decided to play some shows and he put together a band, since I was already in another one. So I didn't meet the rest of the band until I got home from the tour of this other band. I had one week to meet everyone and learn to play with them. It was crazy. We were shaking hands and learning songs at the same time."

Sherman says Tooth & Nail entered the picture after a rep from the label found a 7" single the band had put out with O'Brother at Cornerstone. From there, contact was made and eventually a contract was signed. Sherman says no matter how things came together, he's just happy to have someone interested in supporting the band.

"We're just thankful that someone will pay for us to get into a recording studio and wants to release our record," says Sherman. "That in itself is a great enough achievement. Looking forward, if anyone listens to the record or comes to the show, then that's just a bonus. It wasn't this calculated thing where we said, 'We're going to sign with Tooth & Nail and they're going to make us the largest band in the world.' It just seemed like a group of genuine people who enjoyed what we were trying to do and could help us achieve whatever it is we're trying to achieve. I just don't know that we even know all of that yet ourselves."

BY MATT CONNER

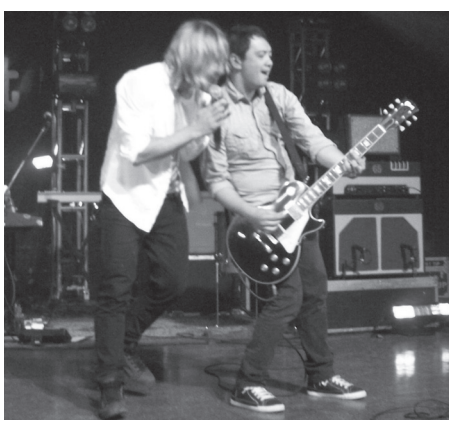
LIVE REPORT

Switchfoot
Canada, May 20

REVIEW & PHOTOS BY KEVIN WEDDELL

(Barrie, Ontario) Switchfoot performed at the W.A. Fisher Auditorium on May 20, which began with a meet and greet for VIP ticket holders, of which I was one. This being the first time for myself to see and meet the band, I was quite impressed by all members of the group as they did not just sign autographs, but wanted to know everyone's first name who was in line. This made the meet and greet more personable for all that took part. I was wearing my HM Army t-shirt I had just received and all the guys especially John and Tim Foreman picked up on it, which allowed me to get a position right upfront center stage.

When the band took the stage they opened the show with "Mess of Me" and continued to get the place rocking by playing a number of their hits from *Hello Hurricane* and *The Beautiful Letdown*. Everyone in attendance was also introduced to a few songs from the forthcoming album, *Vice Verses*, which was mixed in the middle of the show amongst the bigger hits.



The crowd was a mixture of young and old alike – everyone enjoying the show immensely together. John made a comment how this show reminded him of the early days of Switchfoot when they toured with the likes of Five Iron Frenzy. This put a large number of people into their own little frenzy – including myself – hoping to hear some early stuff from albums like *A New Way To Be Human* and *Learning to Breathe*; but unfortunately, with the large number of hits they have had, the band did not get back that far. They did perform a new song that they had just written about a month earlier, which they called "Original." This song's rocky edge had the ability to get the crowd involved and was embraced by the people in attendance ... and will only continue to move the band forward in their success.

John's own intensity was amazing – from playing his guitar with his teeth to jumping off the drum kit. The guys concluded the night with a three-song encore, which included "Gone" and ended with "Meant to Live." At the end it seemed that no one wanted to have the night end. The excitement and energy seemed to follow everyone out the door with everyone commenting on how amazing the show was. I had heard and read that a Switchfoot show was amazing and I can say the band did not disappoint myself or anyone else.

Letters to the Edit

HM

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SCRIPTURE "Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God." (1 John 4:2,3)

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HEAVEN'S METAL HISTORY?

Sorry to take up your time, but I was wondering if you have stopped publishing the Heaven's Metal Fanzine for the time being. Saw my last issue and was just wondering since I haven't seen any others. Thanks for your time.
–David Fuller, via email

Ed – No, we haven't killed the fanzine that we do on the side (like a sister publication), but it was about 5 months between issue #87 and #88. Sorry for being a metal slacker!

A LIST OF SUGGESTIONS²

I just wanted to comment on the "A list of Suggestions" letter. Personally, I subscribe and read HM because of just that: hard music. Not to mention heavy metal. Granted, mentioning the general happenings of Christian music and some more mainstream bands like Sent By Ravens is good, but that is not why I love HM. I love HM because you guys advertise bands that may not have otherwise been heard of outside of the underground. I would have never heard For Today, Impending Doom, With Blood Comes Cleansing and War of Ages if it were not for you guys! Christian rock today has started to become more mainstream sounding and popular, not at all in the minority or passed over, but actually over-emphasized and copied (in my opinion). HM represents the voices of bands that deserve the time to be heard. CCM Mag covered P86 and Superchick, but never Grave Robber. I don't know, I'm just a little tired of the mainstream and appreciate the underground's voice. Maybe it's because I also love vocals that have growls, yells, screams, etc. Not to mention the random bits on Bradley Hathaway and people like him. Whatever, metal for me forever. Keep up the good work HM!
–Melody Seip, via email

Ed – Thanks for the encouragement. I like to balance things in the "mix" that we cover, but I firmly believe that we should "major" in the heaviness, so you can relax

WEEKLY ENEWSLETTER GLITCH

The link works fine on my desktop, but the news links (if you want to read the full article) have never worked on my Android smartphone. Very odd. Any other Android users have the same problem? Maybe a good idea to ask the question in the next weekly email.
–Mike Beidler, via email

Ed – Hmmm. Thanks for the heads up. We'll look into fixing that when we can. Any ideas?

STICKER MY CASE

No worries (on the delay getting my sticker order sent to me). It's cool. I'm watchin some vids and I saw a War of Ages with a giant HM banner behind them. I'm lookin at some of your products and I like them a ton. The sticker was for my car and bass case. I played in a band and I always showed love thru stickers. And your Worship at Full Volume are by far my favorite.
–Jonathan Galicia, via email

Ed – We need a new Worship at Full Volume design. I'm hoping for a killer shot of a drummer. I still haven't found what I'm looking for.

CORAM TYPO

In Loyd's review of "Death is Dead" by Coram Deo, he makes a song comparison between Coram Deo's "Judas" and Tourniquet's "Holy Danger". While the lyrics "holy danger" are included in that song, the actual title is "The Threshing Floor", from "Stop the Bleeding". And yes, the guitar riffs in question are quite similar. Love the mag!
–Brian Lang, via email

Ed – Dang, Lang! I hate it when we do that! At least we got the sonic reference right, eh?

SHOW ME THE BREAD

Thank you so much for the info. I have enjoyed my digital downloads and am looking forward to the forthcoming hard copies. In viewing the archives, I saw an article on Showbread in your January/February 2011 issue. I love Showbread for many reasons (one being my son is their drummer! Ha!) and I loved the article and picture. I would really like to purchase 4 physical copies of that issue. Could you please tell me how I could do that? I really love your magazine! I enjoy keeping up with all the bands and reading the album reviews. My husband and I go to many music festivals and always enjoy the HM stage. Keep up the great work! I am looking forward to purchasing those extra copies!
–Wendy Porter, via email

Ed – You guys sound like awesome, supportive parents. You rock. Our online store at hmmag.com/hmstore has a link for "Back Issues" and all available issues are listed there.

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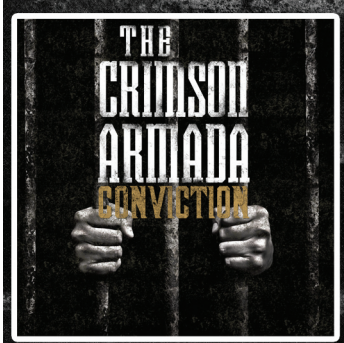

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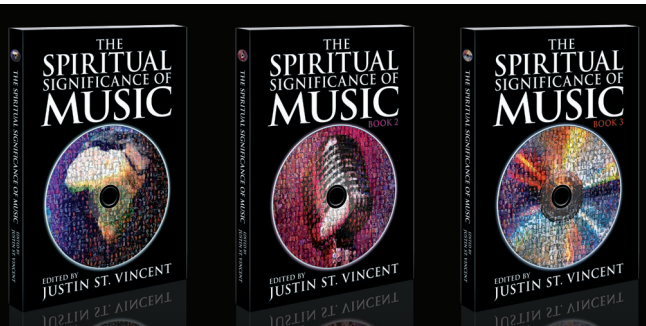
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It's a streamlined little monster of a record, not wasting any time to get to the hooks and the introduction of the band's core power: the gripping vocals of frontman Christian Lindskog. – ***Alternative Press***

After a four year break from the scene, Blindside have made what may be the best album of their career,...."- ***HM Magazine***

Blindside is back and sounding even more hungry than the first go around. With Shivering Hearts We Wait boasts both some of the hard rock act's most mighty aggression beside some of its greatest accessibility. - ***CCM Magazine***

From the album's blistering opener to its electronic filled final cut, With Shivering Hearts We Wait was more than worth the wait. It's an exciting new entry into what hopes to be a long new chapter in the band's career. – ***JesusFreakHideout.com***

The good songs aren't just good, they're great. I believe that I speak for everyone when I say, welcome back old friends. We sure have missed you. - ***The New Review***

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